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NINE PICKED MEN
by GEORGES SURDEZ

THE FOOL AMERICANO
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THE FORT OF FOLLY
by H. BEDFORD-JONES

HUBERT ROGERS

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SAY BEN-YOU'RE NOT TOO BRIGHT! IF YOU'VE GOT HICKIES YOU OUGHTA EAT FLEISCHMANN'S YEAST-3 CAKES EVERY DAY WILL CHASE 'EM - AN' THAT'S A FACT!
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OH BOY-LOOK-THIS TELLS HOW TO GET A BOOK OF DANCE LESSONS BY ARTHUR MURRAY. JUST BY SAVING YEAST CAKE LABELS AND PASTING THEM IN HERE!
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FEW DAYS LATER
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BEN'S GETTIN' GOOD-PRETTY NEAT HOW HE WORKED IN THAT STEP! THERE HE GOES AGAIN-SEE!
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If there are no dance cards at your grocer's, you can still get the book by pasting the 81 labels on a piece of paper, or putting them in an envelope, and sending them with *your name* and *address* to Fleischmann's Yeast, 701 Washington Street, New York City. (This offer holds good until August 31st, 1937.)

(Details of securing Dance Book differ slightly in states West of Denver and in Canada, see newspapers or ask your local grocer.)

Dr. R. E. LEE, famous physician, says: "Eat 3 cakes of **Fleischmann's Yeast every day** if you want to help clear up **ADOLESCENT PIMPLES.**"

● After the start of adolescence—from about 13 to 25—important glands develop. The whole body is disturbed. The skin gets sensitive. Waste poisons in the blood irritate this sensitive skin—pimples break through! Fleischmann's Yeast helps to get rid of pimples by clearing these skin irritants out of the blood. Eat *3 cakes every day*—plain, or in a little water—one cake about ½ hour before each meal.

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New 6-Volt TRINDL Electric ARC WELDER

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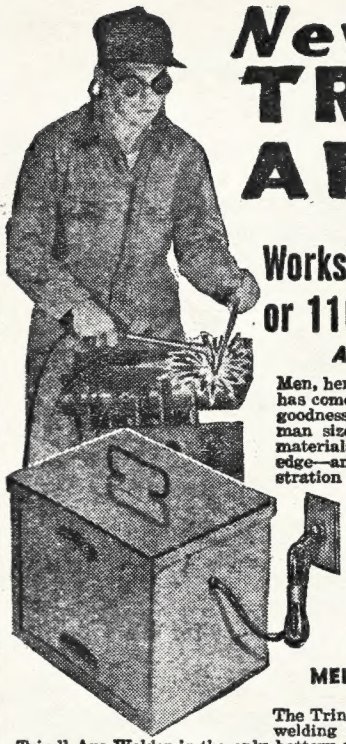

Works on Storage Battery or 110 Volt Light Circuit

A REAL WELDER

Men, here is the hottest specialty item that has come along in years. A real honest to goodness electric arc welder that does a man size job. Built sturdily of the finest materials. Requires no mechanical knowledge—any one can use it. Every demonstration should make a sale. This new Trindl Electric Arc Welder is made possible by the invention of a low voltage carbon which gets white hot from the current of an ordinary 6 volt storage battery such as in your automobile. It only uses about 20 to 25 amperes of current which is about the same current drain as 4 headlight bulbs, yet develops about 7000 degrees of heat.

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The Trindl Welder is simple to use. Expert welding can be done by anyone. The Trindl Arc Welder is the only battery welder that, after a rigid test, has been approved by the Automotive Test Laboratories of America. It is ideal for making permanent fender repairs—also for broken castings, radiators, cylinders, water jackets, holes in auto bodies, hog troughs, boilers, tanks, milk cans, radios, batteries, etc. Iron, Steel, Brass, Copper and Tin can be worked on for a quick and permanent repair. The repaired part will be as strong as before.

NEW 110 VOLT CONVERTER MAKES FULL SIZE PROFESSIONAL UNIT

This new converter is used on any 110 volt 60 cycle electric light socket in place of a storage battery. It is especially designed to be used with the Trindl Electric Arc Welder—COSTS LESS THAN A GOOD BATTERY—The combination makes a full size professional electric arc welder that everybody can use. Ideal for fender and repair shop needs. This is a sensation, not only in price but also in actual results. The converter represents the same fine construction and engineering skill as the arc welder. The complete outfit, including the transformer, is easily portable so that it can be brought right to the job.

USERS SWEAR BY IT—The price is so low that now anyone can afford to have a real welding outfit. Think of the profit you can make introducing this Trindl Welder and Converter—a simple five minute demonstration should make a sale to every interested prospect, especially when they hear the amazingly low price. Garages, radio and battery men, tinners, sheet metal workers, janitors, farmers and home-owners all need the Trindl Welder and Converter.

ACT NOW! There are big profits and a steady business waiting for you taking care of your territory for us. Don't let someone else get in before you—Send coupon Today.

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"Please find enclosed for 12 welders by return mail for I am about sold out now. They are selling fine."—W. C. Anderson, Nebr.

"Received my Trindl Arc Welder and am both pleased and surprised."—Louis F. Glier, Ohio.

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"I sold 4 of your Trindl Electric Arc Welders in three minutes." —C. Gillies, Canada.

"I sold 9 welders in my first ten calls."—F. W. Stice, Iowa.

$10.50 a day profit for you for only selling 6 Trindl Arc Welders. No matter where you turn, you will find people who will want to buy arc welders from you. Garages, shop men, radio repair men, farmers, home-owners, mechanics, janitors, all of them need Trindl Electric Arc Welders. Be the man in your territory to clean up with Trindl.

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Yes! Rush me free particulars of how I can make big money with Trindl Electric Arc Welders and Converters. This does not obligate me in any way.

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Adventure

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Vol. 97, No. 1 **for** **Published Once a Month**

May, 1937

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Cover by Hubert Rogers *Headings by I. B. Hazelton, Amos Sewell.*

Howard V. L. Bloomfield, Editor

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Mountain Lion Attacks Camp

Flashlight is Mightier than the Gun, says Arizona Woman

"I wakened to the ominous snarling wolf-growl of Fritz, our German police dog," writes Mrs. Corinne Jennings of San Carlos, Arizona.

"As I lay there in our tent, too petrified with terror to make a move, something brushed against the canvas wall beside me. Then I screamed and the thing made off with Fritz after it.

"My husband and I leapt from our cots and joined the chase. There wasn't a gun in camp at that time, so Buck took the flashlight.

"Following Fritz's howls of rage to a tall pine, the flashlight pointed out a huge mountain lion snarling down from the upper branches. He stopped as the light struck him and cowered in fear, finally making a desperate leap for the ground and crashing off through the underbrush like a young elephant.

"I for one was mighty thankful we had used the power of those fresh DATED 'Eveready' batteries on our visitor, instead of powder and shot. While a dead mountain lion is harmless, a wounded one is murderous company.

"Out here in the wilderness batteries that 'always work' are mighty important, so you can be sure we get 'Eveready' batteries and look for that DATE-LINE.

(*Signed*) Mrs. Corinne Jennings

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The Date-Line Guarantees Freshness

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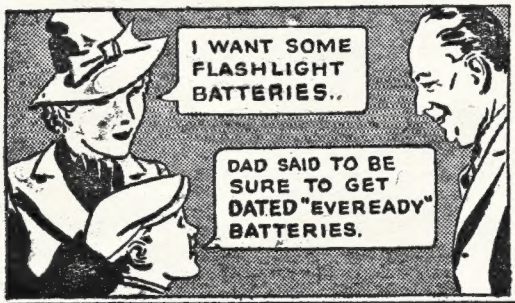

YOU AND YOUR FATHER HAVE BEEN READING THE ADS AGAIN.
IT DOES MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE, MA'AM.. FRESH BATTERIES LAST LONGER BECAUSE THEY CONTAIN THE PROPER MOISTURE

Flight to the Sea

By Boris N. Kamyshansky

I WAS one of the "Green" Kuban Cossacks who did not join either side in the civil war between the Whites and Reds, and fought them both. One summer day in 1921 I found myself alone high in the Caucasus Mountains, the only survivor of my company.

I tried one path after another in search of a cañon leading to the sea. On the second morning, I came to the Old Habitat, the last remnants of Christian Byzantine domination in the Caucasus. And promptly fainted.

When I recovered consciousness a monk was bending over me.

"Follow me," he said.

We came to the entrance of a cave.

"Go in. Walk to the end and leave the lantern there. If God so desires, you will be safe—" and the monk made a sign of the cross.

I entered the cave and walked along the stony corridor. I felt a current of fresh, but warmer air. The light of my lantern showed niches in both walls. In some of them bones of human skeletons were visible. I was passing through the catacomb of Byzantine monks.

I heard a noise over my head as if a train were passing above. Then silence.

At last I saw the light of day before me and found myself in a deep cave. Water was in the cave, and to one wall, to a cleft of the rock, a boat, a Turkish felucca, was tied. Two men were sitting near the boat. They looked to be typical Turkish sailor-smugglers, but they were Tcherkess from Kuban.

In the darkness of the night we rowed out of the cave and around the rocks to the open sea. The *Nordost Bora* was blowing. We put up our mast, spread out our orange sail, and our boat, driven by *Bora*, flew like an arrow from a bow.

Next day I landed in Trebizond.

How do you know you can't write?

HAVE you ever tried? Have you ever attempted even the least bit of training, under competent guidance?

Or have you been sitting back, as it is so easy to do, waiting for the day to come some time when you will awaken, all of a sudden, to the discovery, "I *am* a writer"?

If the latter course is the one of your choosing, you probably *never will write*. Lawyers must be law clerks. Engineers must be draftsmen. We all know that, in our times, the egg does come before the chicken.

It is seldom that any one becomes a writer until he (or she) has been writing for some time. That is why so many authors and writers spring up out of the newspaper business. The day-to-day necessity of writing—of gathering material about which to write—develops their talent, their insight, their background and their confidence as nothing else could.

That is why the Newspaper Institute of America bases its writing instruction on journalism—the training that has produced so many successful authors.

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Many people who *should* be writing become awestruck by fabulous stories about millionaire authors and therefore give little thought to the $25, $50 and $100 or more that can often be earned for material that takes little time to write—stories, articles on business, fads, travels, sports, recipes, etc.—things that can easily be turned out in leisure hours and often on the impulse of the moment.

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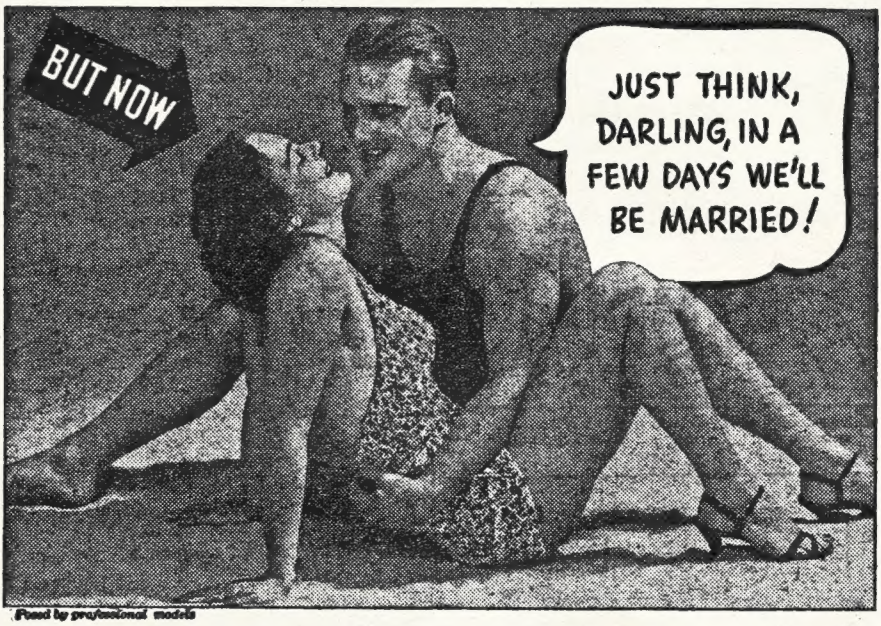
6 WEEKS AGO SHE SAID: "HE'S TOO SKINNY!"



Posed by professional models

NEW DISCOVERY GIVES THOUSANDS 10 TO 25 POUNDS – *in a few weeks!*

IF you seem "born to be skinny" —if you've tried everything to gain weight but with no success—here's a new scientific discovery that has given thousands of happy men just the pounds and solid heftiness they wanted—*and so quickly they were amazed!*

Not only has this new easy treatment brought solid, naturally attractive flesh, but also normal color, new pep, and the many new friends these bring.

Body-building discovery

Scientists recently discovered that thousands of people are thin and rundown for the single reason that they do not get enough Vitamin B and iron in their daily food. Without these vital elements you may lack appetite, and you don't get the most body-building good out of the food you eat.

Now one of the richest known sources of Vitamin B is cultured ale yeast. By a new process the finest imported cultured ale yeast is now concentrated 7 times, *made 7 times more powerful.* Then it is combined with 3 kinds of iron, pasteurized whole yeast and other valuable ingredients in pleasant tablets.

If you, too, need these vital elements to aid in building you up, get these new Ironized Yeast tablets from your druggist today. Note how quickly they increase your appetite and help you get more benefit from the body-building foods that are so essential. Then day after day watch flat chest develop and skinny limbs round out to natural attractiveness. See better color and natural good looks come to your cheeks. Soon you feel like an entirely new person, with new charm, new personality.

Money-back guarantee

No matter how skinny and rundown you may be from lack of sufficient Vitamin B and iron, these new "7-power" Ironized Yeast tablets should aid in building you up in just a few weeks, as they have helped thousands. If not delighted with the benefits of the very first package, your money instantly refunded.

Only be sure you get genuine Ironized Yeast. Don't let anyone sell you some perhaps cheaper yeast and iron tablet, which is not the original Ironized Yeast that has been so successful. Look for "IY" stamped on each tablet.

Special FREE offer

To start thousands building up their health right away, we make this FREE offer. Purchase a package of Ironized Yeast tablets at once, cut out the seal on the box and mail it to us with a clipping of this paragraph. We will send you a fascinating new book on health, "New Facts About Your Body." Remember, results with the very first package—or money refunded. At all druggists. Ironized Yeast Co., Inc., Dept. 845, Atlanta, Ga.

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● Home paring merely affects the surface of a corn, and it means the risk of serious infection. That's why millions of people everywhere are using the new Blue-Jay medicated plaster. By removing the pressure, all pain is relieved quickly. Then in 3 days the entire corn lifts out, Root and All (exceptionally stubborn cases may require a second application). 25¢ for a package of 6—at all druggists.

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Name of Company.....PP-5-37

Lost Trails

Luella Winans Campbell, Las Cruces, New Mexico, wants word of relatives of late Major Ira Winans, Rochester, New York, or relatives of Walter Winans, Baltimore, Md.

George N. Stilwell, 1316 N. Alexander St., Charlotte, N. C., would like to hear from Sgt. Jesse H. Scarborough, with him 1920-1923 in Battery A, 51C.A.C. or any others on the trip from Camp Jackson, S. C., to Fort Eustis, Va., 1921—Scarborough last heard from in Vancouver Barracks in 1925.

Where is Robert Pinkerton of 131st Company, U. S. Marine Artillery, Quantico, Va., 1917-1919? His friend Thomas P. Jordan, 1523 N. Main Ave., Scranton, Pa., queries.

William L. Harcus, Kerrville, Texas, wants news of his brother Henry (Harry) L. Harcus, Kansas City, Mo., fearing abrupt end of correspondence in 1922 meant sudden death.

Wolffe W. Roberts, Box 56, Amherst, N. H., wants word of Frank R. (Jack) Frost, last heard from at Oakland, Calif.

Richard J. Lutz, R. D. 1, Verona, Pa., would like to hear of Frank Fittante. They were marines at Quantico in 1926, when Lutz was ordered to China and Fittante to Nicaragua.

Anyone in D Company, 15th U.S. Infantry, that went to China in 1912, or anyone in the Band of the 2nd Battalion, South Wales Borderers, in China 1913, 1914—write Pennock S. Broomall, 216 West 5th St., Chester, Pa.

Frank Merteul, care The Billboard, 25-27 Opera Place, Cincinnati, Ohio, wants word of a wartime friend, James (Roughhouse Jim) Novak, grenadier voltigeur, 10th Company, First Regiment, French Foreign Legion in 1918; later transferred into Czechoslovak legion in France; last heard from 1925-1926 camping at Caddo Lake in northern Louisiana trying to recover his health.

Roy S. Tinney, Chatham, New Jersey, wants to hear from "Lone Eagle," formerly of Eagle Bar Ranch, Winnett, Montana, and any other riflemen who shot at the National Proving Station, Tenafly, New Jersey, in 1919 and 1920.

A letter has come from Pendleton, Bangkok, Siam, for Capt. R. W. van Raven. Who knows Capt. van Raven's address?

Leslie A. Hall, 808 Hirst Ave., Penfield, Upper Darby, Pa., wants to hear from A. (Scotty) Fullerton, armorer, and "Hank" O'Green, signalman, on U. S. S. Michigan, 1912-14, and in the landing party at Vera Cruz, 1914.

John M. Brinson, 1180 Hale St., Beaumont, Texas, wants to hear from any of the "Black gang," U. S. S. Arizona, April, 1917-July, 1919.

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(Letters on File).

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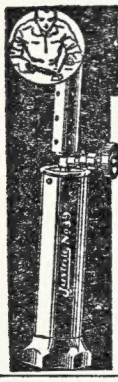

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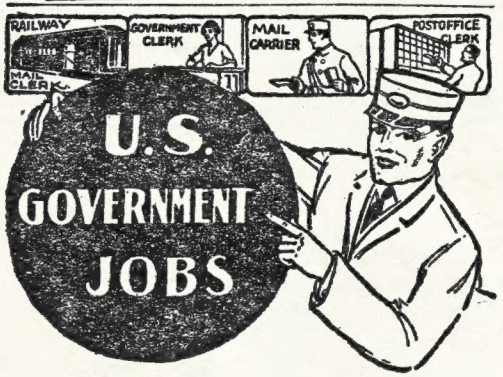

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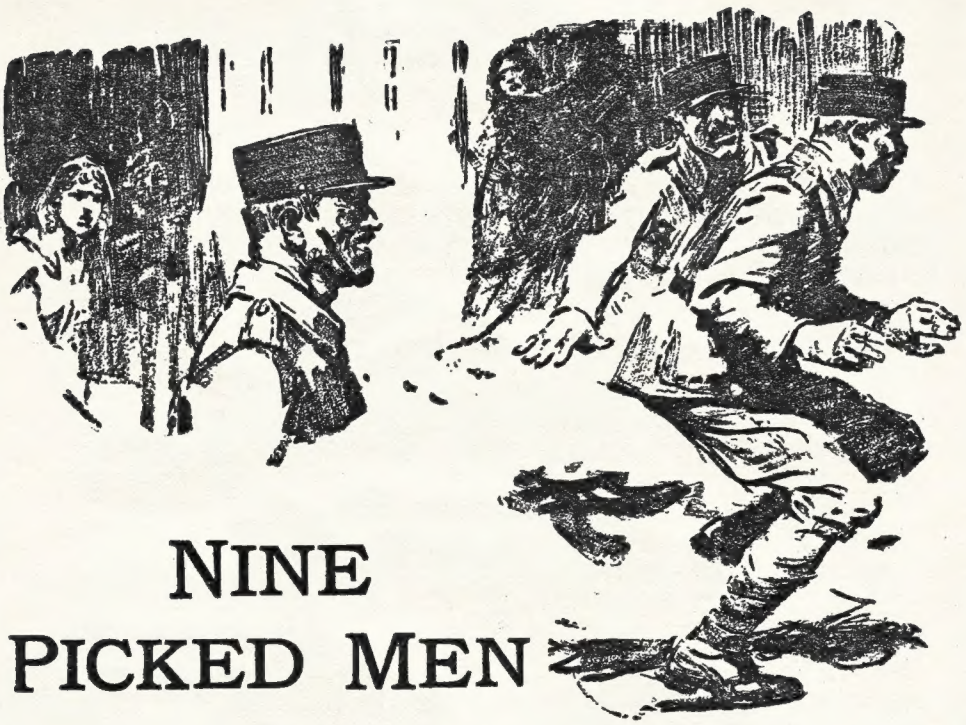

NINE PICKED MEN

By GEORGES SURDEZ

(first of three parts)

"CHESTY" MADDOCK knew that he must get up.

But when he tried, he felt his hands sink to the wrists in bodiless substance; although absolutely dry, the ground was soft and yielding, which was abnormal. Consciousness fused and whirled in his aching brain, spinning like a waterspout across a plain, a shifting, wavering pillar of light through flat darkness.

"Gosh—what a smack!"

He believed that he remembered what had occurred, only a few seconds before. Thorn had caught the ball from center, and he, Chesty, had gone ahead of him as called for by the play. Then he had seen Sislow, the giant end, two hundred and fifteen pounds, spill two men and bear down toward him. He was not so sure from then on. Maybe they had stopped Thorn, maybe not. He had not heard the whistle.

But he knew that he must get up.

What a kidding he was in for, anyway, for having been laid out, after shouting his head off, saying that he was anxious to take one of those first-string All-Americans apart and see how they got that way. He was finding out!

The light in his head went out, as if a switch had been pulled. In the utter darkness of his mind, cruel sounds assailed his ears, odd, piercing metallic notes, unfamiliar and torturing.

This was not a game—he was not playing football. That must be an automobile horn, one of those fancy gadgets. He thought that nobody used them any more, that they had been forbidden. Cars on the road, cars, cars, cars? Where had this car fetched up after crashing the fence? What had happened to Thorn, to the girls? They had been screaming a moment back, screaming . . .

"All right, Legionnaires, take him!"

A hand clasped his shoulder; he was shaken hard.

A man's voice was shouting. Couldn't they see he was hurt? His eyes blinked open, and he saw a white surface very close to them. He was in bed, of course, in the hospital. But what was the idea of shaking him? His brain rang, thundered and echoed, as if ten thousand steel hammers were pounding ten thousand copper anvils in the vault of his skull.

Then scattered words stabbed through, alien words. Some of them had meaning for him: *Clarion*, that was bugle, *eau* was water, *cochon* certainly meant pig. He gathered that a bugle had sounded, and that water was about to be tossed on a pig. That dispelled all illusions, all dreams: He knew where he was, who he was, what he was, and no mistake!

"All right, Corporal," he murmured.

He sat up, swung around, raising his hands in a vague plea for improbable mercy, for a reprieve for his throbbing head, for his tormented body. When they struck the floor, his feet felt as if they had been larded with steel needles, dusted with coarsely powdered glass. His chest heaved, and the acrid taste of wine rose to rasp his palate, its vinegarish odor flooded his nostrils. His puffy eyes reopened with an effort.

He was awake, and had returned to his present personality: Legionnaire Brandon, Joseph, Matricular Number 12742, Depot Company, Sidi-bel-Abbés, Algeria, with four years, eleven months and several days left to serve before his contract expired, his agreement with the French Republic, Third and Latest of the Series, to wear her uniform, eat her food and fight her battles. That brought no thrill, no elation.

"*Malade*," he stated. "I'm sick. What do you do when sick?"

"Croak or forget it," Corporal Detesch consoled him. "Get going. You have five minutes."

There was a pleasing smell of coffee in the long, narrow white room lined with its neatly made cots. But there was none left for him. Only two or three men were lingering. The others had gone down the stairs already.

BRANDON hauled himself up, all seventy-three inches of him—wide, hard, solid bone and muscle, a finely knit human machine, what the military surgeons had called *une académie magnifique, superbe!* But his brain spun the faster, his sinews and tendons were strings of wool, his bones were soft rubber. He sank down.

He was experiencing a hangover he would never forget. From drinking ordinary red wine! He had thought the stuff had no kick. His strong, rather handsome features were spoiled by a vacuous expression, his gray-green eyes were vague.

With his crisp, curling dark-blond hair, he appeared less a man of twenty-three, a professional soldier, than a bewildered boy.

This did not touch the corporal, who had other concerns. He danced up and down before Brandon, cursing, threatening.

"Specie of animal, half-wit, drunken mug!" He wrenched the French words through his German vocal chords, mangling them in the process: "Lack-guts! Loafer! Whiner! I'll report you, see if I don't—" he combed his brain for a lashing insult, and climaxed: "Wilson!"

A private drew near. He was about thirty years old, squat and swarthy. His beady eyes showed confidence in himself. He grinned.

"Leave him to me, Corporal. I'll get him down in time." Then he shifted into colloquial English: "Listen, Joe, you gotta get your clothes on, see? I'll clean up the dump for yah. This guy, he means no harm, get me? Yuh never know how serious they take themselves."

Brandon looked at him with intense gratitude, and reached for his trousers. He was getting too sour, he decided, and had misjudged his companions. This little guy, for instance, had not forgotten how he had been treated last night.

"What's your name again, fellow?"

"Benedick Garrazi." The man was doing five things at once, folding blankets and sheets, straightening the pack on the shelf, disposing the hard pillows as required by regulations. "Get a move on. We ain't got all day."

"You speak English well. Been to America?"

"Sure. Told you all about it last night." The Legionnaire was mopping up the floor around the cot. "Went there before I could walk. My old man had a grocery store in Brooklyn. When I was in the sixth grade, about thirteen, my people had a fight and my mother took me back with her. Tried to go back, last time just a month ago, and couldn't make it. So I reenlisted here."

He asked no questions, but Brandon felt that he should repay his confidence: "I'm from New Jersey."

"I know. Get up—" Benedick helped Brandon wind the blue sash, buckled on the belt. "From somewhere close to Pennsylvania. Your old man owns a garage. You've been to college. Said it would be in all the papers if it got around you were here. Is that a fact?"

"Just bull," Brandon replied lamely. "I guess I feel pretty important when I'm soused. What else did I say, eh?"

"About being a fine football player and running around with dames with motor cars. Most guys couldn't understand, so it's all right. And nobody'd squeal, unless there was some dough in it. Let's get going."

"Say—" Brandon grasped the Italian by the elbow "—thanks a lot, Dominick."

"Suppose—" Garrazi grew somewhat stiff and hesitant—"we say three francs,

and cut out the thanks? I sent the first part of my enlistment bonus home, and I've had no cigarettes except those you gave me."

"All right," Brandon agreed.

But he was vaguely shocked. Three francs—that was not a lot of money, between twelve and eighteen cents—to have the mess cleaned up for him. But he knew that it was an overcharge, nevertheless. Three francs was a corporal's pay for a day out here. He needed a friend and he had found a servant.

They ran down the stairs, and Garrazi led the way to the kitchen, where a cook who knew him gave them black coffee, a watery liquid that tasted of chicory and molasses. But it was hot and gratifying. In another minute, they had taken their place in the small detachment of recruits going out to drill. They carried no arms, as rifles and bayonets had not been issued to them as yet.

BRANDON thought he had recovered.

But as he stood in line, waiting for the order to move forward, a shaft of sunlight suddenly darted over a roof, slanted down into the yard and smote the nape of his neck. That light, that warmth, normally a caress, hit him like a club, kindling new pain in his head, in his back, seeming to turn his leg sinews into red-hot wires.

"Attention!" Corporal Detesch shouted.

A sergeant had appeared, stood before the detachment. He was tall, lean, with a hard face, hewn from mahogany, it seemed, ornamented by a short, clipped black mustache. His jaws bunched near the ears, like those of a bulldog, and the lift of his massive chin, the glitter of his small, deeply sunk eyes, showed an inordinate, supreme pride. He wore several crosses and medals, but Brandon could not yet identify them.

"At ease! You all understand what the word 'left' and the word 'right' stand for? This is your left foot—" He pointed. "By groups, left foot first, forward—'arch!"

The heavy hob-nailed boots clumped irregularly behind him. The sergeant turned to wink at a colleague on duty at the iron-grilled gateway, extended his left arm: "Left—left!"

In a very short time they reached an open area of beaten earth, near the old ramparts. And the monotonous coaching started, wearing, endless. There were some minutes devoted to the proper salute. There was much talk of stiffening the calf muscles and looking into the eye of the one saluted. There followed simple formations, complicated by the fact that some of the men understood no French, a few no German, tongues in ordinary use in the Legion. The pace of the whole was that of the dullest. And some of the rural districts of Central Europe breed them very, very dull.

Brandon was bored, because he had been through this several times before. He understood some French, had even taken a course in French literature, and he had understood very rapidly the principles of group formations. For a man who had been drilled into the split-second timing of complicated football plays, who had learned to control his hands, learned to check himself in full lunge at the shrill of a whistle, this was childish, easy, mechanical stuff.

He pivoted, marched, stopped, marched, pivoted. The ground was a wheel of fire as the sun grew higher. Sweat dripped into his eyes, burned them. On his hips, the leather belt chafed softening flesh. March, halt, march, halt, march. . . .

"Eh, you—you!"

Some poor devil was about to catch it, to be called out for individual instruction That sergeant was filled with a fierce, sardonic patience.

Brandon halted with the others,

sought the unfortunate squarehead, the ignorant Polack, who would be made a show for the others. He was beginning to appreciate the sadistic pleasure that non-coms took in singling out some unlucky boob.

"Corporal, is he asleep? What's his name?"

"Brandon, Joseph, Sergeant."

"Legionnaire Brandon, forward!"

Stupefied, Brandon strode forward from the rank. What was he doing wrong? He had understood every word, had not collided with anyone. He believed, for a flitting instant, that he had been called out for special praise, for a demonstration. He was tall, well set up, and officers had usually said a few kindly words. But this was a sergeant, not an officer.

"Where do you come from, Legionnaire?"

"America."

"Say 'Sergeant.' North or South?"

"United States of North America, Sergeant."

"That explains it all. Wise guy and Legionnaire de luxe." The sergeant touched his mustache with two fingers, as if to hide a smile. "Attention. Forward—'arch! Right . . . right! That's correct. But do not flay out your arms. The momentum comes from the feet only like this:" The sergeant illustrated, his body moving as if released by a spring. "Not like this."

He sunk his head into his shoulders, stooped a bit, relaxed his knees. Then he spun on his heels, flinging his arms wide, dropping them oscillating and limp as his sides.

"Chin high, head erect, knees straight, arms hanging easily—march. Left . . . left!"

Brandon obeyed. The sergeant lifted his eyes helplessly. There was an improvement, but still it was not right. The chin, the head, the arms, the knees, had been right. But why did Brandon do this: He gave a ridiculous little dance in one spot, mincing with his feet gingerly. Then he stamped hard and snapped: "Like this, see!"

Brandon saw that the sergeant was working himself, that the sun was just as hot for him, judging by the perspiration streaming down his bronzed neck.

"Sick at the feet," Brandon explained, seeking for the right words. It was one thing to comprehend, quite another to speak. "My shoes too small. Hurt, make sick."

"You'll grow used to them," the sergeant assured him. "Put them down smartly. March. Left . . . left!"

Brandon was angry and confused. He turned right.

"Legionnaire—" the sergeant smiled with infinite gentleness—"hold up your right hand. The foot on the same side is your right foot. The other is the left foot. You should know it by now."

THAT was the beginning. Without losing his outward calm, keeping to courteous words and friendly observations, the sergeant spun him left, right, left. The spectators, left at rest while this was under way, laughed with servile appreciation. They knew what Brandon could not guess, that the big guy was paying for the flattery of the surgeons, for the praise of the officers. Subconscious jealousy was welling to the surface.

Stiff, erect, comical, Brandon was marched across the fiield, marked time, turned right, turned left, was brought back by barked orders to face the sergeant, like an enormous trout played on an invisible line. He still tasted the wine of last night, the morning's coffee, yet was consumed by an intense thirst.

"All right. Get back in the ranks. Attention. Forward—'arch! Left . . . left! One, two, one two, one two . . . chin high, Brandon, one, two, one, two, right . . . right! Halt, halt, *sacré mille millions de noms de dieu!* Brandon, show me

your right hand. Now point to your right foot. Sure, positive? Forward—'arch! One, two, one, two . . . right . . . right! Halt. Brandon!"

"I'm sick, Sergeant," Brandon declared at last.

"You should have reported sick at eight o'clock, when the call was sounded for the doctor. Report yourself tomorrow, if you can make it stick. If not, it's two days in the jug. Meanwhile, to work. Once more—"

Brandon was so tense that he beat the order, and walked right out of alignment. The sergeant summoned a corporal: "Luteyn, will you take this chap aside and keep him until he understands orders? He's throwing this whole gang out of gear."

"Sure, Sergeant." The corporal, a sturdy young German, not over twenty-one, grinned widely. "Come along, Legionnaire."

He marched Brandon aside, called him to attention.

"You're doing all right," he said unexpectedly. "Sergeant Kolb is just riding you a bit. Your fault—you're big, you spend money and you get drunk. Any one of those things goes, any two, but three attract attention. I'll keep you going in long walks, and give you plenty of time to obey orders."

"All right, Coporal."

For two hours, Brandon walked in the sun, pivoted like an automaton. And he wondered that Corporal Luteyn, who appeared intelligent, an understanding youngster, showed no trace of boredom or fatigue.

WHEN they had returned to the barracks, at ten o'clock, Garrazi came to sit at his side. He told Brandon that he had served five years in the Legion before, and had returned after four months of civilian life because he could not obtain passport or money to enter America.

Brandon contrived to drink his soup, a soup that was at once thin and greasy. But he could eat only a few shreds of the boiled meat, some morsels of vegetables. The smell of the wine in his tin cup proved nauseating. Unfortunately he made his distaste evident, and this won him little sympathy. Garrazi absorbed what he left, surprised that Brandon, a large man, lacked appetite. The Italian thought the cook was exceptionally good.

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But Legionnaire Brandon could not make clear that he was suffering because all his habits had been interrupted. He missed the comforts he had come to expect after physical fatigue: a shower, a rubdown. He would have liked ice cold tomato juice, then perhaps scrambled eggs and a pot of strong coffee.

He grumbled about the sergeant.

"He's not bad," Garrazi assured him. "Just likes to be funny. That corporal went easy on you. Maybe he's looking for something. Hell, I don't mean much: A cake of soap, a package of cigarettes."

"Thought it meant a guy's chevrons to accept anything—"

"Well, he didn't ask you for anything. Suppose you give me five francs and let me handle it? Five and three makes eight."

Brandon handled the grimy small bills carefully, peeling each one from the others in the tight wad formed by the heat and sweat in his trousers' pockets.

When he had arrived, a few short days before, he had possessed more than sixteen hundred francs: the cash he had brought with him, the price of his civilian clothes and the first half of his enlistment bonus. Now he was down to one hundred and seventy-five francs and some centimes!

"Here you are. Three for you and five for the corporal."

Then he removed his boots and his tunio, stretched on his cot. In the short seconds before his tired body sank into deep sleep, he reviewed his life, wondering how he had come where he was, going from one disappointment to another: He had expected heroes and he found petty chiselers; he had hoped for action and he found monotony.

He had made mistakes, but all mistakes had not been his own.

He first remembered living in a small frame house outside the town he now called home. His father had been a foreman in a factory, saving money. There had been his mother, his three older sisters. At that time, his name had been Lloyd Madanovic, and the family hero had been Grandfather Madanovic, who had come from Croatia or Bohemia—Brandon no longer recalled exactly—to go to work in the steel mills. He had married an American-born girl of his race, reared seven sons, giving each one a better start than his own.

Lloyd, who had become Brandon, had been told as a very small boy that he resembled the old man, had been shown his Sunday coat, an immense garment smelling of camphor, his pipe and a few important looking certificates he had earned while serving in the Army in the old country. Grandfather, who had been a strong as three ordinary men, wise and hard-working beyond belief!

His memory had been banished when the name had been changed to Maddock, banished with the family album when the piano was bought. The girls were growing into young ladies and did not wish to be considered foreigners, and the father was too occupied with his garage to pay much attention to what the women at home decided.

Brandon had been interested in athletics from childhood, had become a star on both the football and the basketball teams of his high school. When he was a strapping kid of nineteen, conceited enough to have earned rightly his nickname of "Chesty," an acquaintance of his father had offered to put him through college, if the boy entered a certain university in the Middle West from which he had graduated. Brandon had accepted.

He starred on the freshman football team, and his first season with the varsity brought him fame, a fame somewhat dimmed by that of his friend and team-mate, Thorn, regional high-scorer, second choice on several All-American teams.

But Chesty found satisfaction in the fact that sports-writers often linked his

name with that of the star halfback, with the routine statement that the man who clears the way to a touchdown is often more valuable than the one who totes the ball. It was predicted that the sophomore star would certainly be a candidate for All-American fullback in his junior year.

Chesty was proud of his achievements, sure of himself, conceited. But he now knew that it had been a front, nothing really wrong in himself. Others could not guess, however. For instance, he had been engaged to a girl at home from the age of seventeen.

He had considered her something apart, sacred, his bride of the future. But she had not known this. And he had had a very serious quarrel with her that last summer in the States, when, instead of returning to work at the garage, he had accepted an invitation from Thorn to spend his vacation in New England.

Then she had seen his photograph in the newspaper, with Thorn and a couple of young women, and had been very jealous, unreasonable. She had laughed harshly when Chesty had explained that he had become a public character and that he could not control the captions. She had written him many nasty things concerning Beulah Brice—who was really a swell person—because she happened to be rich, beautiful and twice divorced.

Chesty had gone home on a flying visit before returning to college. His fiancée had reproached him for having become snobbish, for borrowing money from his sisters, from his father, to keep up with foolish standards not meant for him. She had consented to a reconciliation only on condition that he be seen no more with Beulah Brice. Chesty had promised quickly, for Beulah had left for Florida. He had gone to see his backer, "touched" him for an additional two hundred, which he would pay back some day.

As the good fellow was satisfied with his protégé, he made no protest, said he stood ready to help. Not because of Chesty's marks in French, or his knowledge of nineteenth century poety. He was delighted by Chesty's success as an athlete.

Chesty knew this and was not an ingrate. He proved it in the first two games of the season, when he not only played superbly, but was lucky: A loose ball just naturally sought his arms, and once he had it, he knew where to go and how to do it. He scored thirty-seven points in two games, ran a kickoff back for a touchdown, ninety-three yards!

ON A Thursday night early in October, Chesty was in his room, his mind occupied by a number of thoughts he then believed weighty. To start with, he was worried about Thorn, who had gone sort of haywire since Chesty was coming into the light so rapidly. It was becoming obvious; several mutual friends had mentioned it.

Chesty had not imagined Thorn would prove such a poor sport. Of course, he was spoiled and pampered, conscious of his money, of his ancestry. That made Chesty laugh. Once that ball was snapped, nobody cared how much dough your old man had or whether your forebears had landed from the well-known *Mayflower* in 1610.

The telephone started to ring downstairs; someone answered it after a delay. Then a voice shouted his name: "Maddock—'phone."

Beulah Brice was at the other end, in a roadhouse twenty miles out. She was with Dolores, whom Chesty would remember, and Thorn—yes, Thorn! She knew he was supposed to be in training, asleep, and they had been trying to get him back for two hours, but he was plastered and belligerent, and they could do nothing with him.

Chesty explained in guarded words

that no undergraduate would squeal on Thorn, who was needed Saturday, and that she could ask any fellow from the college to assist her. Then Thorn got on the phone, called Chesty a swell-headed this and that, who was right there when it came to chiseling in but watched himself where there was any risk. Chesty smiled scornfully. So that was it?

"Okay, if that's the way you feel, coming right over."

And he hung up on Thorn's profuse thanks and maudlin apologies. The taxi out set him back seven bucks and tip, because of the hour. He found the girls on the porch, located Thorn in the bar. Chesty had to take a couple of drinks to celebrate the reunion and reconciliation.

Then they piled into Thorn's car. Chesty drove for a few miles, but Thorn was full of booze and truculence. The two women could not hold him still, so Chesty climbed into the back seat while Beulah took the wheel.

Thorn was not a large man compared to Chesty—five-ten, one hundred and sixty-eight—but he was wiry and quick. Before long, Chesty yearned to hang just one good sock on his chin, but he did not dare. Not with the first important game scheduled for the day after next and their rivalry already public and commented upon. So he pretended amusement, laughed, while Thorn mauled him like an ill-bred small boy.

"For the love of Mike, speed up," he urged Beulah.

"Sixty-five right now," she called over her shoulder.

Chesty wanted to get his companion in bed, out of sight. It was close to one o'clock, and there were certain people who did not like football men and might report them. He called for speed again.

"Let me drive," Thorn cried. "I can make her go."

He rammed Chesty's face with his palm, climbed over to the front seat, reaching for the wheel over Beulah's shoulders. The girl screamed, and Chesty pulled him back.

Then the car was careening. There was a splintering of wood—Chesty knew it was the low white fence—crashes, thumps, and in the glare of the remaining headlight, a colossal girl in a scarlet bathing-suit seemed to leap out from a sign-board straight at him—

He hid his head in his folded arms—

That was all.

He had suffered only bruises and shock, had left the hospital the following day. He had been lucky, but there had been times when he had envied Thorn and Beulah, who had been injured seriously. He had even envied Dolores, who had died very soon after. For the dead and the hurt receive sympathy. He did not.

The State policemen reported that he smelled of liquor. The presence of the women attracted wide attention. The papers were merciless to Chesty, knocking his reputation to bits even more rapidly than they had built it up. They said that fame and praise had gone to his head, that he had not prepared for a most important game, betraying his team, his college and the paying public!

Chesty tried to prove that he had been in his room until after ten that night, but no one heard him out. He was not on trial, he had been judged and sentenced. On Saturday, when his team was trampled into a muddy field by a number of selected young men who would have done it, probably, even if Chesty had been present, he was painted as an unsavory combination of Judas, Benedict Arnold and other traitors.

His homecoming was grim. No one remembered that he was only twenty-two, that one evening and one game could not be the whole of his life. His disappointed backer refused to see him,

"You were crazy to come here!"

sending word that he need not consider himself in debt, as he was marked off as a poor investment. His sisters, humiliated by the scandal, treated him like a leper. And his girl said that she would have stuck to him, but for the fact that he had broken his promise and seen Beulah Brice again!

His father was the exception.

"Let 'em yell, Lloyd. Suppose you did all they claim you did, what of it? You didn't steal, didn't do anything dishonest. Get to work for me. Some fellow will fly the ocean, some gangster will be killed. Five years from now, nobody'll remember about this. Did I ever tell you why your grandfather left home? He half killed a cop, served a term in prison. Yet he lived a good life after that, eh?"

Chesty nodded. He tried. But it was his father who released him. "You need some fresh air. Here's two hundred bucks lying around doing nothing. When it's gone, maybe I'll have more. Even when your mother was alive, I often wanted to do the same thing."

They shook hands. Chesty understood that his father knew his girl was going around with another man. He did not say where he was going; his father did not ask. He drifted to New York, to Boston, aimless, puzzled. Then he obtained a job on a boat, by buying another man's papers.

He had had moments of contentment, moments of bitterness and trouble. Then, one day in Le Havre, he had enlisted in the Foreign Legion, because he considered himself homeless, because he had vague dreams of picturesque scenes and military glory.

CHAPTER II

THE HARD WAY

WHEN the bugle awoke Brandon, nearly three hours later, he felt fine. After all, he was young, strong and healthy. His boots made him wince as he slipped them on his sore feet, but the pain vanished very soon.

He spent the first part of the afternoon working like a coolie, cleaning out one of the big rooms, shifting beds and mattresses from one floor to another. Then he went to the drill field again with the detachment in training, and all went well. From a distance, Corporal Luteyn nodded smilingly, discreetly, and Brandon saw that he need not worry about Garrazi's honesty, nor fear to offend a corporal.

During the gymnastics course, two men dropped. One was revived immediately, resumed work. The other was taken to the hospital. The heat of the summer day had had effect.

Brandon was shocked at first by this seeming brutality. Then he recalled that he had seen men go back into a game after being knocked out, others carried off the field with broken bones, or in complete collapse, to the cheers of forty thousand spectators. They took their own game seriously too, these officers and soldiers of the Legion!

He had intended to turn in early that evening, but the five o'clock meal proved to be as tasteless, as unattractive as the other. Brandon at first pushed his tin away, then forced himself to appear to eat. All the others, even the recent arrivals like himself, ate greedily and looked at him with dawning resentment as he scorned the stuff they relished.

They were Europeans, accustomed to this particuar diet. To many of them, the messkit filled with good, clean food was something of a treat. Some had dreamed all their lives of eating meat once, let alone twice, every day.

Brandon was neither meek nor timid. But he sensed that he was becoming unpopular, because he made it plain that the existence was not up to his standards. What if he were better educated than most of his companions? He had chosen to be one of them deliberately. He did not want to earn another nickname indicating obvious conceit—he must make them forget he was American.

But he gave up the attempt before long, and surrendered his tin to Garrazi. And when the food had vanished from his sight, he discovered himself to be very hungry.

He decided to go town and have a meal.

He avoided his companions of the night before, because he wanted to rest mentally, to try to forget that he was in the Legion, forget that he wore a uniform. He found a *bistro* on a quiet side street near the Hotel de Ville, sat down at a small table with a clean checkered cloth. Here, conditions worked in his favor: He had a good, tender slice of roast lamb, potatoes, string-beans, salad, bread, cheese, an orange and a bottle of wine for six francs.

Life seemed bearable as he struck a match to light a cigarette. Then the door opened, and three Legionnaires entered: Garrazi, Meister and Deschamps.

They had been searching the cafés for him for over an hour, but expressed surprise at running into him. They clung to the table like leeches, and at length his embarrassment for them overcame his good resolutions.

"Have a drink?"

Cane chairs spun merrily, six elbows thumped on the table, three eager faces turned toward the owner, a fat chap enthroned behind a zinc-topped bar.

"Listen, Joe, we treat you on pay day," Meister announced. "We're not sponges. Might as well order a couple of bottles, eh? And, boss, bring some

chips and olives, eh? Maybe a little cheese and some bread. All right, Joe?"

THE first two quarts of red vanished with amazing celerity. The owner brought two more, looked questioningly at Brandon, and placed them on the table. It would have taken a type of courage rare in a Legion recruit to shake his head and wave the stuff away. Then Meister suggested that the roast meat had looked good, and had some brought for the three. They ended by having the entire dinner, but in reverse order, through lingering tact, as if obeying an idle, casual impulse.

Brandon was mentally adding figures as new dishes and full bottles were put on the table, as a taximeter clocks away with the turning of wheels. Eighteen and six, and six, thirty. Black coffee with a little "something" in it, four francs, thirty-four!

When he was eighteen, he had taken a girl out, with six dollars in his pockets. He had perspired because she had judged anything under two bucks beneath her notice. Brandon could see her now, with her powdered oval face, the little red hat with the funny plume resting on her dark hair, and the play of her full lips as she ate, chatted with him and hummed to accompany the orchestra at the same time, an impossible feat achieved with ease! She had eaten more than he had feared, and he had thought and said harsh things about her.

He realized with a shock that girls as pretty, as sweet, as clean, would be tabu for him for a long time to come. Even that kind, which he had grown to scorn. Let alone the girl, his girl! He had been in a mess, that was true, and his explanations had been incoherent and vague. But that was no reason for—

That was over.

"Give me a straight cognac," he told the boss.

Two more bottles of wine: Those fellows were insatiable. Forty-two and six, forty-eight, and two, fifty, and tip, fifty-five! His good friends, who took him for a sucker!

Their entering wedge, their claim to consideration, was a knowledge of English, acquaintance with America. Deschamps had deserted a French steamer and worked two years as a dish-washer in a cafeteria in New York. Meister knew the whole Atlantic seaboard, had been a sailor on a coastwise vessel in his late teens. The three of them wanted to get back to the States. And they were sincere, did not speak to flatter Brandon.

"After five years here," Deschamps told him, "you'll be crazy to get back,

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no matter how, no matter what happens. If you ask me, you were crazy to come here, *plain nuts.*"

"I didn't ask you," Brandon said in a surly tone.

Five years, five years, five years! Drill and sleep and stew, stew and sleep and drill! Five years: Not a sincere friend to talk to, not a decent girl to look at, for five years. Drill and sleep, stew and sluts.

"Cognac," he called.

"Go easy," Garrazi urged.

"Mind your own business."

He had that second cognac, a third, a fourth. He felt better; the world was softer, less sharp, less hard in outlines. Five years, well, one lived through five years! And he had showed them all up —just how, he could not have told. But his present humiliation, his suffering, seemed to rebound and spatter his family, his friends, his girl, the fools who had not believed him.

"Cognac!"

Five years? He'd do five years standing on his head. And he stilled the persistent clicking in his brain: And eight makes fifty—no, sixty-three, and two makes sixty-five—and two more bottles —the hell with it, when it was gone, it was gone!

"Take it easy," Garrazi repeated.

"I can take it. I can drink this stuff all night. You should taste the stuff I was brought up on, fellow! When we had parties—high school kids, mind you —the stuff we drank would have made a hole through this table! All right, Wop, it's eight-thirty. Won't take us more than ten minutes to walk it, and five if we run. I can't run, eh? The length of the field in eleven seconds, in eleven seconds, with a suit on. Like this, like that—"

His long arms shoved them aside, the flat of his palms struck resounding slaps. They were tipsy themselves, full of his wine, of his food. They liked him, and their somber Legionnaires' truculence slumbered. They laughed and dodged.

They were little guys; Brandon knew he could out-think them, out-fight them. Legionnaires, eh? So what? He was a Legionnaire himself. For five years!

At last, the boss helped himself to eighty-seven francs and sixty-five centimes from the handful offered him, refused a tip. Brandon was hoisted to his feet, the képi set straight on his head, his belt buckled. He was given final instructions, and walked into the barracks, erect, stiffened with tremendous effort of the will.

But the sergeant on duty, a squat, brawny Swiss, aroused his sense of humor, and Brandon gave vent to a prolonged sound of derision as he passed. The non-com watched him weave his way across the yard in the warm night, held up by three friends. He shrugged.

"Full as a bed-bug again," he remarked casually.

Fortunately for the private, he had mistaken the raspberry for an innocent belch!

BRANDON'S money was gone two days later.

He told his three usual companions that he was cleaned-out, broke, *fauché comme les blés,* as Deschamps taught him to say, "flat as a harvested wheat field." He was pleased and surprised that they did not desert him and shared their few *sous* with him cheerfully. Garrazi, the only one of the trio in the same room, was proving a valuable mentor.

Rifle and bayonet had been issued to the new recruits, and the instructors had started on the manual of arms. This was not altogether new to Brandon, who had been in the R.O.T.C. in college. But what he had learned before only confused him here. Moreover, the big fellow learned that between toying with a rifle a few hours occasionally and living with one, there existed the same difference as between a casual flirtation and

a marriage. You cannot neglect a rifle any more than a wife or a baby. Steel and wool though it is, the weapon will develop ailments if neglected.

The deadly cloak of boredom settled on him as he passed along grooves dug and deepened by long established routine. Conversation was limited to a number of elementary topics with the majority, and as the Legion is all extremes, those who could talk well did not listen at all.

Brandon had become convinced that the sergeants were "gunning" for him. Thus far, they had not punished him with prison. But they wore out his patience. A man does not like to be told that his hands are grimy, that his buttons are loose—this usually illustrated by a casual pull that tore off the fastener completely—that his shoes need a shine.

"Pssst! Eh there, the big guy!" the *adjudant-chef* at the gateway would say: "Come here, come here! You can't go into town like this, you know. Who taught you how to wind puttees? Right about face. Go and dress properly."

The room corporal, Detesch, valued his two woolen chevrons and used them constantly. He imitated the sergeants in all things, including a mild, good-natured persecution of Brandon. He had found a nickname for him, Wilson. As proof that the sting is in the intention, nothing irritated Brandon more than the use of the name of the illustrious War President!

"I'll take a poke at that guy," he told Garrazi.

"To start with, you can't sock a corporal just like that," the Italian remarked doubtfully: "Then, too, he's plenty tough. Don't kid yourself."

Brandon smiled with amused scorn. He was two inches taller than the corporal, fifteen to twenty pounds heavier, and a trained athlete. Moreover, he was three years younger. Certainly, there was strength and power in those sloping shoulders, in the thick, comparatively short limbs. But Detesch was very slow mentally and none too agile physically. A muscle-bound strong boy.

A newspaper man who had seen Brandon box had written: "If Chesty should ever elect to take up professional boxing, he would be a terror among the third-raters this minute, a scourge to the second-raters inside a year, and a serious threat for top-notchers in two or three years."

"Listen, Benedick," he said, "get that guy to take off those chevrons, and I'll show you. I'm not kidding."

He hoped that somehow this would reach Detesch and act as a challenge. Perhaps it would end his tendency to ridicule a better man.

Meanwhile, as he had no money left for meals outside, Brandon was eating the Republic's rations, and beginning to relish them. He found himself looking forward to macaroni day, and grunted with the same satisfaction as the rest when a special meal of kraut and sausages was served one Sunday. He did his chores, drilled during the day, and after five, strolled up and down the Boulevard de la République, grave and bored, like hundreds of others, looking at the glittering cafés, saluting officers every eight or nine feet.

On concert nights, when the Legion's orchestra,* which all Legionnaires admit is the best in the world, played on the public square, he would be one of the figures in khaki *capotes* and blue sash hovering in small groups on the fringes of the crowd. And he was sure that the pretty, rounded, Algerian-Spanish maidens were admiring him alone, as the others were sure they had been distinguished from the anonymous mass of soldiery.

* The term Legion orchestra instead of Legion band is right. One hundred pieces, including many string instruments. According to Legion authorities—and some outsiders—it ranks with the Garde Républicaine and the Boston Symphony.

And he knew just as well as the rest that he would offend them if he addressed them. Legionnaires, except in rare cases when the family had accepted them and passed on their worth as possible husbands, are not considered fit company for a good girl.

Prejudice is annoying at the receiving end. Brandon had met it before, when he had first attended high school parties, when he had entered college. His father owned a garage, his grandfather had been a laborer. But that had been different, because the majority of men laughed at it and considered it a feminine failing. His best friend, Thorn, had social background, money. And no one in his family had ever made him feel that he was received only because he was Chesty, who played football.

Here, despite the people's official pride in the Legion and its military achievements, there was watchfulness. Brandon grew angrier when he was compelled to admit that he might not have taken all his companions home to dinner. Not because of what they were, but because of what they might do. But understanding did not bring peace of mind.

He was a better man, had more education, had known an existence of which they could not dream. But for that matter, so had a number of his companions. Aside from the liars, there were several who had fine backgrounds, good education. Rucket, for instance, who had been a very fine German surgeon, worked as orderly in the hospital and played violin solos in the orchestra. Sergeant Hermosilla, of the Casual Company, an Argentine who coached some of the younger officers in their efforts to play polo.

NOTHING creates nostalgia more than string-music in the vibrating air of a summer night. One evening Brandon returned to the barracks early, his nerves jangling. By chance, the orchestra had played three waltzes that he remembered very well. And, had he had money, it would have been cognac night again.

"Ah, there you are, Wilson!" Detesch greeted him.

The men who were sprawled on their cots, or playing cards in small groups, started to laugh. Brandon stripped to his underwear, slipped into his blankets. Detesch came alongside.

"Clean up the mess around your cot. Getting near nine."

Brandon sat up, looked around. There were cigarette butts and greasy papers that had held cold meats.

"Those who made the mess can clean it," he said.

"You're on room duty—"

"I was, three days ago. It isn't my turn."

"I tell you to clean up. I'm corporal, you know."

"Why, the lousy Dutch——!" Brandon murmured soulfully. He rose, found a broom and started to sweep. Upon Detesch's question concerning his mumblings, he said aloud: "You're the top dog—now. But it's a good thing for you you're a corporal."

Detesch grew scarlet. He had been told, very probably, that Brandon had stated on a number of occasions that he could be licked. And a man who has worked very hard to earn chevrons, as had Detesch, nevertheless will detest being told that he is using them!

"Maybe you'd like me to help you with the toe of my boot, eh?"

This was not a serious speech, just corporal's talk. But Brandon stopped short and eyed Detesch: "Think you could?"

The Legionnaire's French was not perfect, and his effort to pronounce correctly caused him to speak in a dignified tone. All laughed, and a voice shouted: "How about it?"

"Want me to show you?"

"You are a corporal, yes, but you

"It's a good thing for you you're a corporal!"

can't go around kicking people," Brandon specified, bringing a loud cheer.

"Shut up," Detesch called. "You'll have a sergeant up here! You, Wilson, I mean Brandon, you be careful, or I'll take off my chevrons and fix you."

"Go ahead!"

Detesch changed from red to cream-cheese white. He stripped off his tunic, folded it and laid it on his cot.

"All right, my chevrons are off. Work quietly, shut up, or—"

This time, the men rose and gathered around the two, stepping between them, pleading: "Listen, you're both sore—take it easy! Don't be a sap, Joe! Corporal, it's just that he has *cafard*. A sergeant may pop in—a sergeant—"

"The devil with that," Detesch snarled. "Let me at him—" He brushed aside those holding him.

Brandon was somewhat startled that the stocky German was not bluffing, that he was ready to fight, and had the ridiculous idea that he had a chance! He felt just a trifle sorry for him, the poor lumbering hulk!

Then there was no one between them, and the corporal came nearer, facing Brandon squarely, feet braced apart on the same line. He leaped and swung his short arm suddenly, as a man wields a hatchet. He was faster than he looked, and the impact on Brandon's right shoulder numbed the arm.

Brandon stepped back to get room, struck the proper stance, left arm extended, to demonstrate his boxing skill. A left to prop that fat fool, a right hook to the jaw, that was all needed. A first, tentative jab hit the nose lightly, another touched above the eye. Brandon now was ready, had the feel of it.

He lunged with his left again, ready to swing the right.

Then a strange thing happened. He

was off balance, falling forward. He did not know what had happened. But there was the floor coming up, coming up—

The light crackled and went out.

CHAPTER III

"YOU FALL AND HE HIT."

BRANDON remained in the infirmary for two days.

He discovered that he had fallen down a flight of stairs, suffered lacerations of the face and a slight concussion. On the same occasion, he discovered as well that he had lost even the shreds of identity he had possessed as a recruit, that he was a cell in a large body. As the surgeon took stitches in a cut on his forehead, he remarked to his aide:

"Peculiar thing, you know: One of the very few big, muscular men I have seen who had not been tattooed. Excellent dental work, also. Probably German—"

"American, *Monsieur le Major,*" Brandon corrected.

"Be quiet, please. As I was saying—"

When Brandon returned to the large room in the barracks, he learned that Garrazi and nineteen others had been sent with a large detachment for training in Saida. Corporal Detesch greeted him briefly. Brandon was surprised to find him a good sport who did not rub in his victory.

There were new men in the room, recruits.

Only one attacted Brandon's interest: Matloka. He was large and handsome, with fine black eyes, and short, thick black hair sprinkled with gray. He spoke French with ease, could converse in several other tongues so fluently that no one could be sure which was his very own. He was recorded as a Hungarian, thirty-six years old.

Even in the common khaki that slays individuality, he looked trim and gentlemanly. He knew weapons, had soldiered before, evidently, but not as a private, for he had trouble with minor duties, such as making up his cot and cleaning the floor. Detesch had fastened his attention upon him, but the new man accepted his heavy-handed sarcasm without surface annoyance.

"Very well, Corporal. Sorry, Corporal. At once, Corporal."

Brandon walked into the small newspaper store that carried foreign publications one afternoon, and noted that Matloka had purchased the *London Daily Mail.* He spoke to him in English, received a correct answer, uttered with a slight British accent. But if Matloka understood casual remarks concerning the weather, North Africa, the Foreign Legion, he was deaf to hints concerning himself, dumb concerning his past.

A more recent problem puzzled him: Try as he did, he could not understand how Detesch had knocked him out so quickly. Not that he hated Detesch. He merely resented his assumption of superiority. Yet he doubted himself enough not to undertake to fight him again before learning what had happened.

"He socked you there," one witness declared, indicating the nape of Brandon's neck: "Like that—smack! And you fell."

Brandon gathered that he had been dropped with a rabbit punch. But how had Detesch reached that spot, with his short arms? A postal card from Garrizi, mailed at Saida, gave him an inspiration. He wrote the Italian and asked him what had happened.

Dominick answered. He did not write English as well as he spoke it. His years of public school were far in the past.

> Dear frend Joe: In ansser your asking informassion, i write you. The caporal look for the left hand to punsh agan, and she punsh agan. His left hand he turn and grabbe your to pull on. You cannot staid up because your wait is wrong place. You fall and he hit by

his right arm, not with the hand, but with like a stick—

There was considerable repetition in an effort to make things clear, followed by sound advice concerning another attempt against a man with so many tricks. Brandon decoded it.

Less vain than Brandon, the corporal had granted that his adversary might have some ability, and had watched carefully. Having been struck twice by the left hand, he had formed a plan. On the third jab, he had caught Brandon's left wrist, probably shoved his leg forward to trip him as he pulled him down, and clubbed him with the forearm as he dropped.

The whole answer was in the different approaches of the fighters: Brandon was still under the impression that a fight was a sport; Detesch knew that a fight was an unpleasant, often necessary means of winning a point, something to be got over with without receiving personal injury.

Brandon would have liked to try again, but Detesch gave him no reason for it.

BRANDON received the second half of his enlistment bonus, which had been delayed by obscure technicalities. He had reached the conclusion that it was foolish to hope to hold on to cash in the Legion. It merely permitted a man to have luxuries that made his normal existence duller by contrast. He invited Meister and Deschamps to celebrate with him, although he had little illusion left as to their real opinion of him—a loudmouthed, big guy knocked flat by a Dutch *cabo!* He also asked Matloka, but the man refused: "Many thanks, comrade. I do not care to."

"Listen, Matloka," Brandon urged, "we'll—"

"Young fellow," the older Legionnaire concluded, "learn to allow each man to make a damn fool of himself in his own bloody fashion. Have a good time."

It started out as an enjoyable evening. The trio had a splendid meal at the Hotel Victoria, complete from *hors d'oeuvres* to champagne, and cigars that were rather good for French monopoly tobacco. All three deplored the absence of Legionnaire Garrazi, who had had such a good voice and had known so many songs. Brandon missed him keenly, as he realized the Italian had been his only sincere friend. By ten o'clock, the conversation lingered over trifles.

"What do you say we go to the Negro Village?" Meister suggested, as casually as if Deschamps and he had not prearranged the matter.

"Need you ask?" Deschamps rose at once.

A few minutes later, the three entered a palace of amusement near Rue Verte.

A CRIME

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It was crowded, as a number of Legionnaires had drawn bonus cash and were entertaining friends.

Brandon had visited the place before, and it held no allure, for the brand of entertainment did not meet his standards. When it was reported that an American had arrived, a fleshy young person, a salad of Arab, French, Spanish, Maltese, annexed him and conversed in broken but most precise English. Between snatches of sales talk—she collected a percentage on the drinks—she informed him that she had had an American sweetheart, in Algiers. As soon as he was discharged from the Navy and bought a lunch-wagon, he would return to take her away from it all. She admitted that she had been waiting five years, but her faith was unshaken.

"You tink I lie? Look, he has my name, I have his—"

She bared her shoulder, and Brandon read the legend tattooed in the center of a pink heart radiating faded green rays:

Jack Smith
Use no hooks

Brandon nodded and agreed that this was a proof of lasting affection. The motto? Well, it meant something like: Nothing can tear us apart. Yes, he would have a drink, cognac preferred, but otherwise, he was happy and contented just to sit where he was and listen to her. She was delighted with this statement. Any woman can be physically attractive. It takes a lady to converse charmingly.

It was probably cognac that was poured into Brandon's glass, for there is a very severe French law against false advertising. But it traduced that venerable name. It had the mellowness of prussic acid, caressed the tongue like a red-hot rasp.

The first glass of it made Brandon see weird shadows on the painted walls. The girl's teeth multiplied in a spread of dull white and scarlet blotches, like the keys of a piano. He hastily downed a second glass, to steady himself, reached for a nearby mug of beer for a chaser. A long shudder stirred him.

"Pretty good," he said. "Kind of young, though."

Deschamps was among the dancers, hopping about gravely with a lanky female in a Moorish costume and red pumps. Meister had vanished upward. A few acquaintances nodded to Brandon from other tables; one or two came over to shake hands ceremoniously. One of them must have taken the bottle of cognac away, for the fat, lame old Mauresque brought another. Brandon tasted that one, in the hope that the first one had been an accident. But no, such a brand really existed.

"I'll get out of this," he mused through the girl's persistent speeches concerning Smith and his *wagon-restaurant*. "Next time I get hold of either of them, I'll hand him a hundred francs and beat it. There's no use shifting to beer. It's not cold and tastes lousy."

But getting hold of either Meister or Deschamps proved an undertaking in itself. Possibly they suspected, from his expression, that he wished himself elsewhere, and they had no means of knowing that he would not force a return to barracks together. A half dozen times, Brandon rose to pursue one of them through the lower rooms, ascended the stairs, knocked on the wrong doors.

He was cursed at, screamed at, and decided he had best hold his post at the table. The notes of the mechanical piano stabbed in his brain like long, thick nails. He was so evidently ill at ease that the girl took off his képi and mopped his brows with a handkerchief dipped in cheap cologne.

"Oh, that was a bad cut on your head! Where did you get it? Did you fall?"

"Sure, I fell—" Brandon pushed her away impatiently. Naturally, there was a scar, and one could still see the marks where the stitches had been taken out.

This brought up a flood of unpleasant memories. "Now, will you keep your paws off me? Here's ten francs. Shut up."

His head felt heavy, and he rested it on his palms, elbows braced on the table. Last year, at this time, he had been in New Hampshire, with Thorn. Swimming, riding, and flirtations with the girls across the lake. He had played tennis and golf. And he had written to one of his sisters, to borrow fifty bucks to get a mess-jacket and a waistcoat like Thorn wore. She would wait a while for that fifty!

He had been twenty-two then, a year older than Corporal Leyton, who at that time had been serving his fourth year of Legion! Some one had worn the uniform he now wore, some one had cared for his rifle. Clothes and equipment, they had been here, waiting for him. *Mektoub,* it was written!

"You tink I lie. Look, he has my name. . . ."

THE ten o'clock leave men had departed; the crowd was thinning. Slender, swarthy Arabs were beginning to appear, as if seeped up through the cracks in the flooring. He looked around, did not see his friends. During his musing the girl had left, abandoning a pile of red-stained cigarette stubs on a small plate.

Brandon rose, found himself tense but steady. He walked over to the bar and started to speak to the old woman behind it, trying to ask how much he owed, how how much his friends owed. She counted on her fingers, then used his when he seemed doubtful. At last, she confessed that she understood, and would give the message to his two comrades that he had left.

"Eh, there, old witch," said a familiar voice beside Brandon: "How about a little service for a couple of Legion corporals? Eh, how about it? Anisette, double anisette!" Detesch looked into his inferior's face: "Hello, there, Brandon! Everybody's good friends tonight, eh? A few drinks, but never drunk, that's Corporal Detesch. Have one on me?"

"Thanks." Brandon held on to himself; he pushed the glass aside. "I've had enough. Got to be going."

"You drink that, with my permission!" Detesch insisted.

He had been drinking, like Brandon, but he was steady on his feet, his hands did not tremble. And the glance of his small eyes bored a challenge into Brandon's eyes. The tall Legionnaire saw the square hand, resting on the edge of the bar, gather its stumpy, wide fingers against the thick palm, to form a threatening fist.

This slight movement, unnoted by others in the room, acted like an electric contact in Brandon's mind. He had learned that this chap was tricky, suspected that the next thing would be a sudden punch at his jaws. A repetition of that first scrap, more ridicule! Not much. . .

Brandon's shoulder moved in a short left that rapped Detesch on the chin. And, suddenly the corporal was seated on the tiles, legs apart, blood on his lips. He climbed to his feet, waving aside his companion, and rumbled forward like an armored car.

But this time Brandon watched for the clutch at his wrist, for a wrestling trick of some sort. He kept his arms close to his chest, snapped his punches. The resulting shocks jarred his shoulders, vibrated up in his arms, to his spine.

The beating by the corporal, swift and ludicrous, had marked the bottom of his fall, he believed, and avenging it was the first step upward.

Dazed, Detesch literally leaned against the blows. At first, he flayed about with his thick arms, then clutched, then kicked. Brandon pulled his body away, inspired to a ferocity beyond his experience. He had the range, the timing, and his fists hit where he pleased, on the lips, on the nose, on the eyes, with flurries of smashes, right, left, right, left, to the small ears lying snug against the skull.

Neither man sought to smash at the body. It was as if each one were trying to extinguish the intelligence in the eyes of the other, to abolish his conceit. With Brandon off to a good start, and Detesch's punches landing on his shoulders and arms, it could not last long.

Three minutes encompassed the beginning, the combat, its end. Detesch was whirled completely around by a hook to the chin, reeled and caught on to the edge of the bar with both hands. Brandon had 'put a head' on him, ravaged his features with some thirty punches. He was through, there was no need to strike more. He collapsed into his comrade's arms, was led to a chair.

"A la garde! A la garde! Patrouille!"

The shrill calls of the women had been going on straight along. Detesch's friend, a wet towel bunched in his hand, was mopping the blood from the swelling face.

"The corporal was offering that crazy man a drink, never gave him a word of provocation," he stated, loudly and truthfully so far as he knew. "It was an unwarranted, vicious assault! The patrol —call the patrol!"

Brandon realized that he had best be gone, and headed for the door. But when he opened it, he saw a group of khaki uniforms in the street. The patrol had arrived, ten men, counting its sergeant and the first-aid man. Ten arms lifted within the room, ten fingers pointed out Brandon, a score of voices accused him.

"There he is, that's him!"

Brandon was backed against a wall.

BY an unfortunate coincidence, Sergeant Kolb was in charge. The chin-strap was snug against his big chin, according to regulations for a non-commissioned man on patrol duty. That bar of black leather, matching his mustache, his brows, somehow made him appear more formidable, relentless. He stood six feet from the door, his right hand fingers tapping the pistol-holster, and he chuckled as he recognized Brandon.

"Oh, our American!" he declared. "Tough and ready for more, eh? All right, Legionnaires, take him."

Unhurriedly, the men laid their rifles across a table; some of them tightened their belts. Brandon had been ready to surrender, but their attitude made him furious. He understood that he was in for rough treatment, under guise of carrying out the arrest. He was a recruit, and had beaten up a corporal!

Eight men started for him, almost everyone a big, powerful soldier. They expected no trouble.

Brandon launched himself forward, headlong. He knew how to drive with his legs, knew how to hit, knew how to keep his feet. He struck that line with shoulder and side, tore a hole through its middle, a hole wide enough for two runners to gallop abreast. To these inexperienced fellows, it was a tremendous demonstration of power.

They picked themselves up, swearing and wondering, came toward him again. And Brandon crashed through again, twisting his body, slipping out of their grips. One of them, holding on to his head, walked toward the table to pick up his rifle.

"No, let's catch him this way," urged another. "What about it, Sergeant?"

"All right," Kolb approved. He was touching his mustache, amused.

For a few minutes, it was like a game. Brandon did some very fine broken-field running, leaped over tables and chairs, and they could not corner him. This was because they were grasping him too high, and while he had the advantage of acquired momentum. The railings of the stair-well were lined with spectators, most of whom now encouraged Brandon.

Then Kolb decided that the show was becoming scandalous, remembered he was not present for his personal amusement. He nodded to one of the men, who went for his rifle. Brandon grew afraid that mere surrender would not prevent the impact of that gun's butt on his skull. A Legionnaire's sense of humor extends just so far!

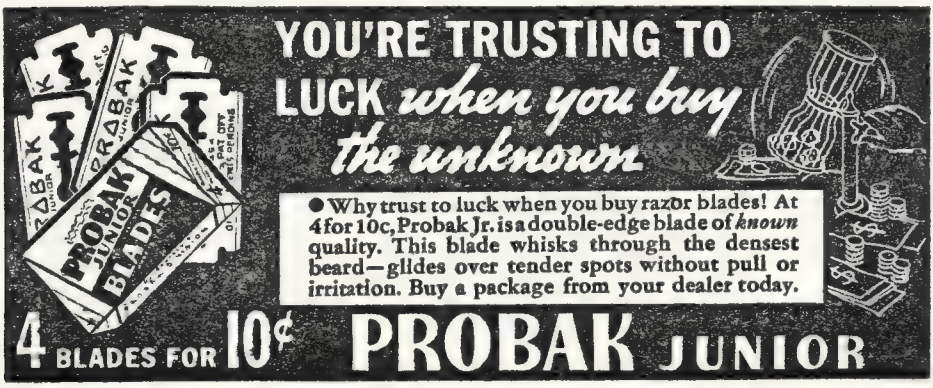
Behind Sergeant Kolb, the door was open, the street invited him to comparative freedom and safety. But there were six men left between him and the sergeant, six men closing in.

He charged again, and broke through. In two strides, he was near Kolb. Courageous and proud, the sergeant opened his arms to catch him. He had handled men even bigger than this one. But his arms closed too high again; he was brushed aside, spun against the wall.

Brandon dove into the crowd before the doorway, hauled his way through, and started to run. He slowed down to a trot as he entered the town proper, to a walk. A few minutes later, he saluted the sergeant at the gate.

"Put me in the prison," he said. "I'm under arrest."

(To be continued)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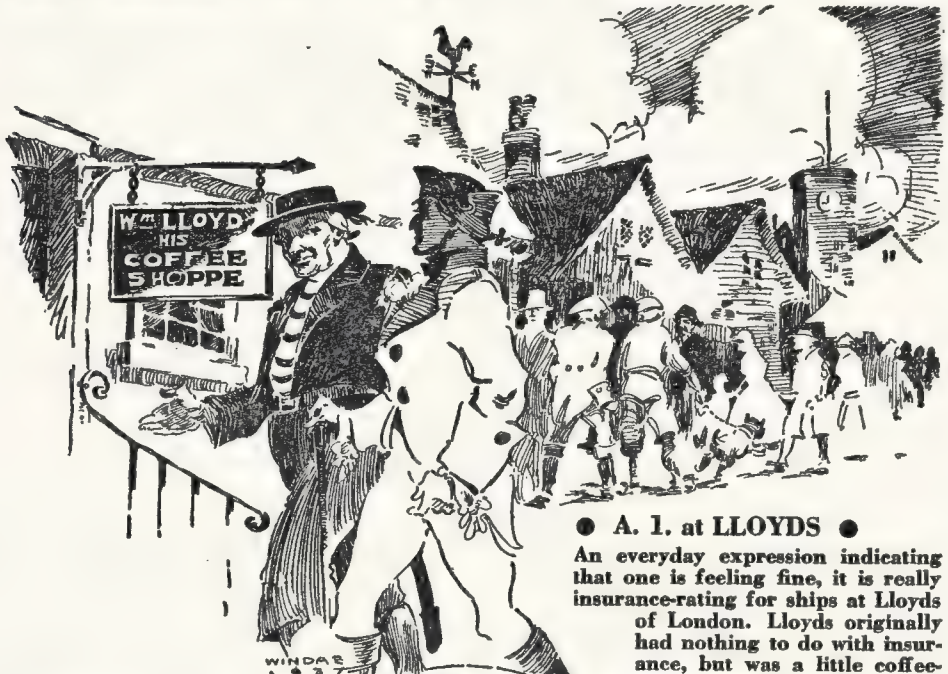
TRADITIONS OF THE DEEPWATERMEN

by WINDAS



● A. 1. at LLOYDS ●

An everyday expression indicating that one is feeling fine, it is really insurance-rating for ships at Lloyds of London. Lloyds originally had nothing to do with insurance, but was a little coffee-shop where merchants and master-mariners met to discuss safe carrying of cargoes.

● LIMEY ●

Because compelled by law to drink a pint of lime-juice every day as a preventive against scurvy, English sailors were nicknamed "Lime-juicers" or "Limeys," and the name has since stuck to all Englishmen, sailor and land-lubber alike.

● HE KNOWS the ROPES ●

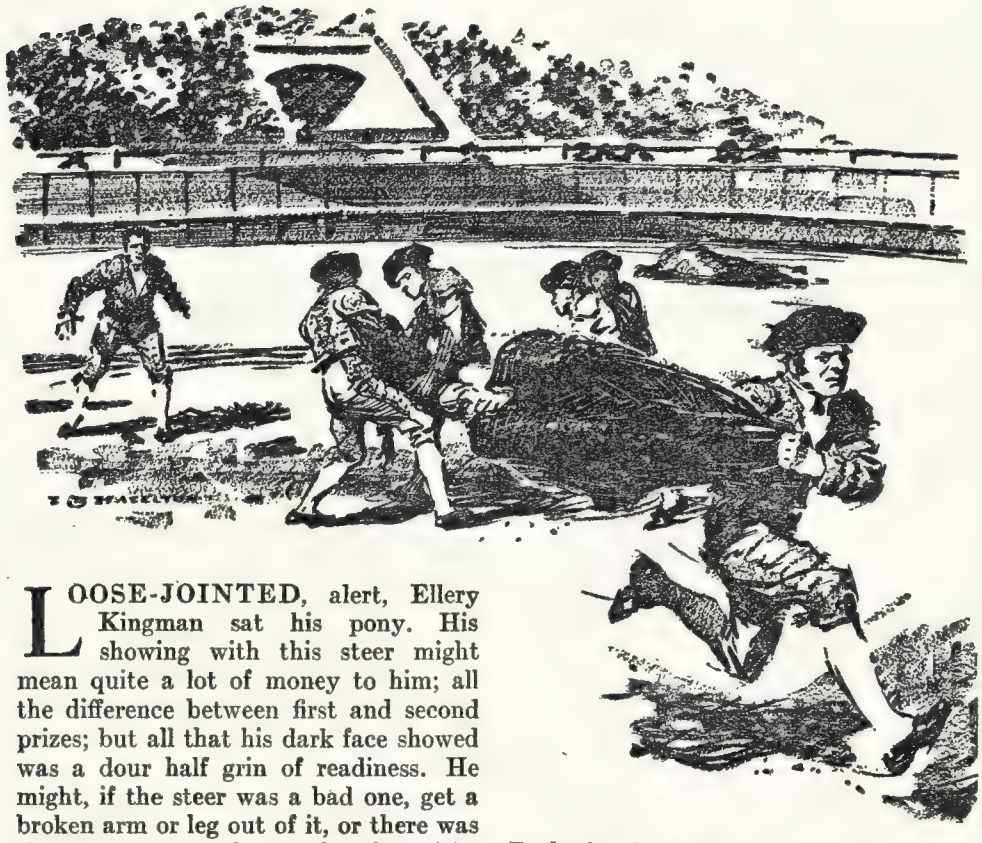
In early days this expression, written on a young sailor's reference, meant he was *not* an expert, but at least knew the uses of the ropes.

● CUTTING A DIDO ●

H. M. S. *Dido* was a fast little brig whose captain delighted to show off by sailing complete circles around the heavier slow men-o'-war of the fleet. From this stunt we get our present-day slang-term when we comment on the flashy behavior of some smart-aleck by saying, "He's cutting a Dido."

THE FOOL AMERICANO

a novelette By Gordon MacCreagh



LOOSE-JOINTED, alert, Ellery Kingman sat his pony. His showing with this steer might mean quite a lot of money to him; all the difference between first and second prizes; but all that his dark face showed was a dour half grin of readiness. He might, if the steer was a bad one, get a broken arm or leg out of it, or there was the ever present chance that he might misjudge the exact twist of his lithe body and get a horn point through his bowels. Those things happened.

But Ellery wasn't letting himself be bothered by those chances. All bulldoggers were quite scornful about steers, let 'em come as bad as they made 'em. The sour apathy in his bony face was a reflection of his feeling: "Aw, what's the use o' bustin' a neck for these furreign jaspers? They don't know a good cow show when it's handed to 'm!"

So, an unappreciated artist, Ellery sat joyless in his coming task. Only his eyes, narrowed, wary, watched the gate.

Up went the starter's hand. The doors flung open. Out charged the steer, a big Brahminy longhorn cross. Ellery didn't have to spur his pony; it knew the business as well as he did; its legs were ready under it to get going on the jump. The two hazers rode hard behind.

In half a dozen jumps it was up to the steer's shoulder. Ellery, as clean as a panther from a pine limb, leapt from his saddle; his hands expertly fastened on the wide horns; with a jerk the whole weight of his body swung under, dragging the great head round at an excruciating angle.

Ellery was not one of those great bull bruisers who pulled an animal down by sheer strength. A hundred and sixty pounds was all of his weight; enough for the best of them—if they knew how.

Ellery knew cattle. He had always been around cattle, so much that he almost knew what they thought. Sometimes, "Danged," said he, "ef I don't believe the ornery critters do think; they can be that cussed fast t' outsmart a feller."

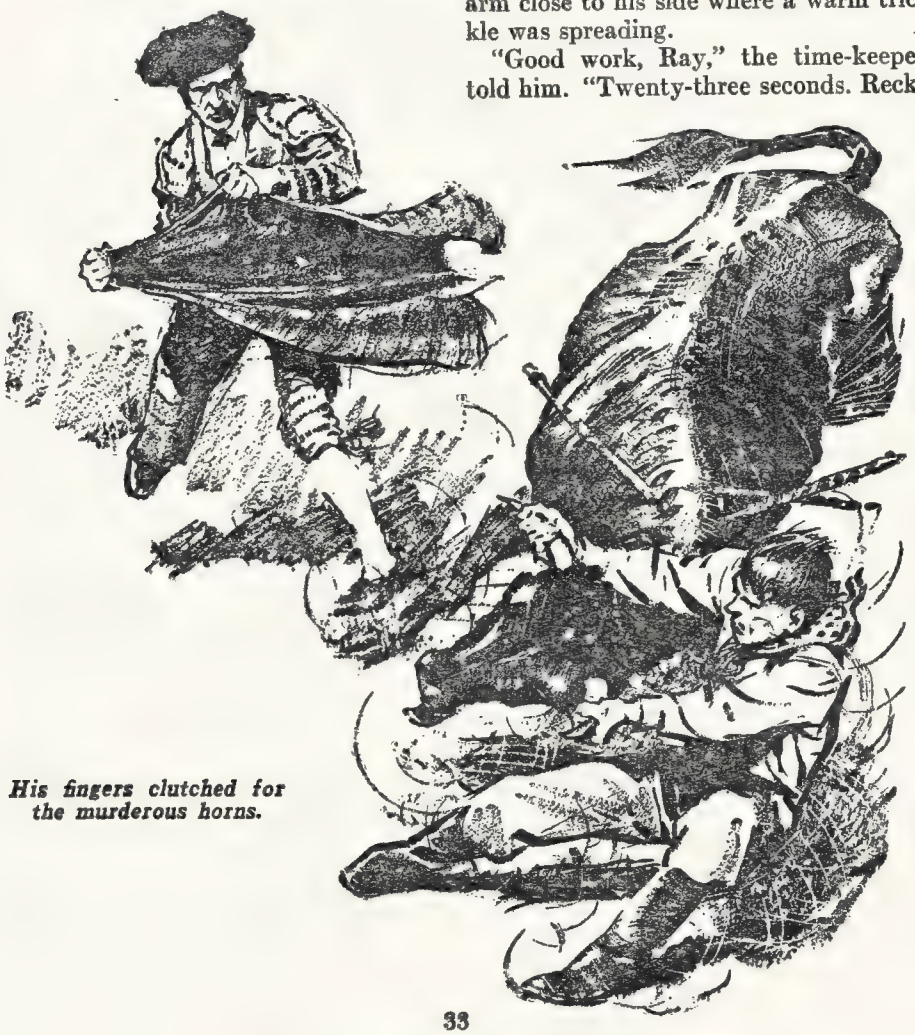
But this one was not as cussed as all that. Ellery had an uncanny trick of juggling his weight in front of a steer's thundering hooves so as to make it cross its feet; and then, of course, down it came.

As this one did, almost as soon as he put his twist on it. It was as fast and clean a throw as any rodeo had even seen. Back in Pendleton or down Austin way, where folks knew rodeos, Ellery would have drawn a big, prolonged hand on it.

But here in Marseilles, amongst these queer European ducks, the thin crowd that sprinkled the grandstand seats of the Champ de Courses in the Parc Borely responded only with a long exhalation, composite of sigh and groan, as though they were half sorry for the steer and half sorry that it had not got its man.

Ellery loosed the animal's horns. It lurched to its feet, viciously vengeful, as Brahminy stock can be. But the hazers rode hard on either side and chased it safely off. Ray walked back to the corral, dusting off his shirt, holding his right arm close to his side where a warm trickle was spreading.

"Good work, Ray," the time-keeper told him. "Twenty-three seconds. Reck-



His fingers clutched for the murderous horns.

on this'll cinch you fer champ. Neither Tex nor Slim's likely t' kick up on you now."

Ellery grunted gloomily. "Ain't any cow critter goin' to best me. Damn' if th' ornery beast hain't nicked me, though. Feels like mebbe a busted rib. But I ain't goin' to give this silk parasol crowd the satisfaction o' knowin' it. I said it before, Monte, an' I'm free to repeat: this hull blamed tour's a mistake. Still," he shrugged, "it's the promoters' funeral an' none o' mine."

ELLERY was right, woefully right; and lamentably wrong too. The tour was a mistake. European temperament had not responded to the rip-roaring, whoopee spectacle of a rodeo; it left the people cold and without understanding. Newspapers, always superior in their assumption of culture, had written up the show as a primitive American display. "An exhibition of the most barbarous," was a favorite description. "Savage," a British paper had said.

And this was the finale, where it was shown that the mistake *was* Ellery's funeral and everybody else's as well as the promoters'. The show manager came the next day with a long face.

"Sorry," he told them. "The show's busted. Some blasted reform society has slapped an injunction on us in this town. And we can't carry on anyhow. The management has decided to quit. There'll be passage money home for everybody, as guaranteed, and prize money will be settled there too. I guess you'll all get what's coming to you, though you may have to wait for it. So there it is and we've all got to damn well like it together."

And that was that, no use bellyachin' about it. Ellery Kingman rolled his cigarette disgustedly.

"Only thing wrong with that," he said, "is, we don't have to like it all together like a orphan home. Me, I'm takin' what I got in my blanket roll an' I'm ridin'."

"Huh?" The less original boys looked at him. "Where all to, Ray?"

Ellery grinned at them through his smoke. "Well, I don't mind tellin' you I come on this tour to broaden my mind with travel, like the folders says; an' all I've seen is race track stands an' perfumigated dudes with op'ry glasses. There's not but one country in Europe 'at appreciates cow play. So me, I'm ridin' for a look-see."

"You mean the Dons, Ray? They'd shore like our show."

"Yeah." Lean faces nodded. Eyes lit in speculative interest. "The Dons 'd understand. Kinder pity we're busted 'fore we c'ld get there."

"Shore. But who'd want t' go all on his own? Busted is co-rect. How'd a feller rustle grub off these 'yer furreign jaspers 'at talks only noises?"

"Aw, Ray's a Texican sand rattler; guess he hables *Español*, don't you, Ray?"

Ellery inhaled a long draw, his gray eyes set on the far blue hills of the West.

"Guess I'll make out," he said.

SO, while the show was climbing a noisy gangplank, Ellery Kingman was riding quiet roads of southern France. Even dressed in plain blue jeans and shirt, his Stetson and his saddle were a show to the wooden-shod peasantry where concrete auto boulevards had not penetrated. He didn't mind that; he did mind that peasant France is still convinced that all Americans are millionaires. But he made out.

Climbing always, up white oak and pine wooded slopes of the Pyrenees, until, over the black gorge of Col de Portus, he was suddenly in a new country, amongst a new people who regarded America, all the Americas, as the natural descendents of their own people.

Guttural Catalan peasants charged

him nothing for eggs, fed him lavishly with indigestible *foezola* of beans and fatty sausage, sped him on his way to the great industrial metropolis of Barcelona, where, they told him, work of any kind was to be had by any man who wanted it and knew how. For which prospect Ellery was beginning to be very thankful.

Barcelona, the richest town in Spain, the town of three separate bull rings. A mecca for a cowman. The great industrial center where any man could find work—if he knew how. Ellery found that what a cowman knew was just as useful in Barcelona as in New York.

But his hard lips twisted in an obstinate smile while his fingers took in another hole in his belt. He had the dour confidence of his open plains country. A good man with his guts in the right place couldn't fail to make out. A man, moreover, to be a good cowman, could not be bereft of ideas.

Ellery had an idea, born of his show experience. He took from his blanket roll his full show outfit, chaps, belts, bead embroidered vest, everything. Dressed like a circus, he walked bowlegged to the Hotel Las Palmas and demanded confidently to see Don Alvarado Jesus S'ta Maria de la Palma, who was awesomely blue blooded and ungodly rich, and as imperviously hedged round by secretaries and camouflaged bodyguards as any fearful Croesus of New York.

Showmanship had its effect. After many scrutinies and whisperings and runnings of underlings, word came that Don Alvarado would see this apparition. And when Ellery got to him he turned out to be no more than a fat, dark, little human man. But he was interested.

"So? A vaquero of the moving picture? *Mira ahi!* I do not think you exist. I have on my rancho vaqueros, but so splendid never. You will roll for me please, one cigarillo with one hand, like I have seen in the cinema but I do not believe to be possible."

Ellery, sour-faced, drew the makin's from his pocket and complied. Hell, if he was a show, he might as well be one.

The little fat man clapped his hands. "*Maravilla!* He can do it!" He became cordial. "By this I know you are not impostor." His shrug was deprecative. "Many impostors come to try to see me. And you want now, what?"

Ellery lit his cigarette, oblivious of the honor that was being done him.

"A job," he said. "They tell me you breed some pretty good cattle, and—"

"Pretty good?" The little man swelled. "The best. The worst fighting bulls in all Spain. Bravos every one. Last season, my friend, let me tell you, we wounded three matadors and killed one. Only the Duke of Veragua can equal the bulls of La Palma, and his record last years was not so good as mine; only four minor scratches—though one, I must admit, was not so bad. The espada Trujillo was gashed to the thigh bone; he will limp thereafter."

Ellery considered the little breeder's bloodthirsty pride with somber eyes. It was a viewpoint new to him.

"And so you wish a job, yes? Well," Don Alvarado appraised him. "*Como no?* Why not? A vaquero of America should not be afraid to look after cattle; and perhaps you will teach some industry to my lazy fellows. *Bueno.* You will do me the pleasure to accept service with me. You will take this note to Manuel Grijalva, who is my foreman at Igualada. he will place you where you best fit."

ELLERY rode over the encircling heights of Barcelona. On his left towered the steep bluff of Tibidabo—named, a proud citizen had told him, from the two Latin words meaning, "I shall give to thee," because upon this very historic spot Satan had offered to give the Savior all the countries of the earth. Ellery

looked at it and grunted. Away on his right loomed the craggy mass of Montserrat, the "Jagged Mountain" famous for its "Monastery of the Cliff"; and the monastery was famous because the Pure Knight Percivale had, at this very spot, found the Holy Grail. Ellery regarded it with somber eyes.

"Hope this promise o' givin' us a job in this country isn't all throwin' the bull," he said to his pony. "Softly, softly, hawse critter. Thirty mile to go on hard macadam an' nary a bridle path."

They jogged on, picking the edges along the modern motor highway that wound over the rolling hills through bleak Aragon to Madrid, Ellery whistled tunelessly, speculating how good a job on a bull ranch would best fit a top cowhand.

"Anyway," he confided to the pony, "if a jasper by the name of Percival could find something good in these here parts, we'd ought to pick us up something right handsome."

But Manuel the foreman read the boss's note skeptically. "*Un* cowboy *Americano?* Do you know anything about the bulls?"

Ellery looked sharply at him from under dark brows. "Well, I've been around a ranch all my life." He gave it as a summation of his experience. "I reckon I know as much as—"

"Is that all? So you will go in the back pasture with the one-year-olds. This, my friend, is something different to just a cattle ranch. You will be under the instruction of Sanchez, who is perhaps younger than you, but has experience and is smart, and will one day rise to full man's work with the fighting bulls."

One-year-olds! Instructions? Ellery swallowed. A hell of a line of talk to hand out to a top hand! Was this some kind of Spanish hazing for the newcomer in the outfit? But Manuel was cold serious.

"How do you call yourself? Your name?"

Ellery's answer was short. "Ellery. Folks call me Ray."

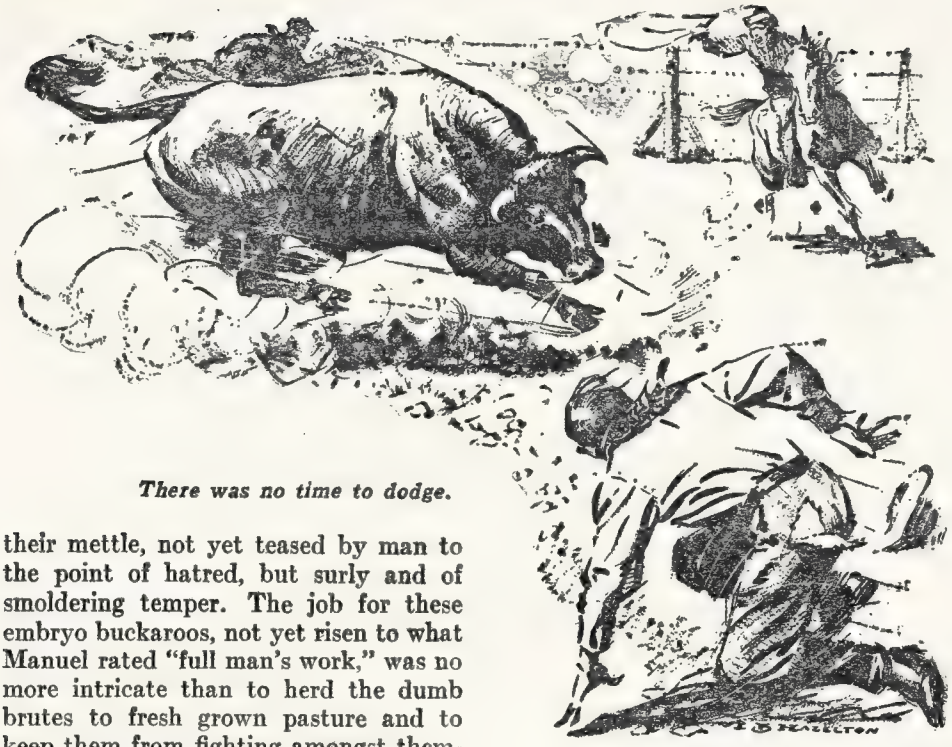
"So. Rai? Rey?" Manuel turned his tongue over the unaccustomed sounds. "El-Rey," he made the nearest Spanish equivalent. "The King." He grinned. "My friend, you have my sympathy. The boys will ride you. Let me advise; do not fight with them. They are tough hombres, these who work with the bulls."

They were a wild bunch in the back pasture; lithe, swarthy men with the devil lurking in their eyes. Ellery had seen enough of Spanish stock in Mexico to have no foolish ideas about "spigotties." These were ranch hands to the core, men light built but fast and sure in their work, with just enough of the don't-give-a-damn in their make-up to hold them to the kind of job that was theirs.

AS inevitably as in any American cow camp, there was plenty of horseplay and rough razzing of the new hand to try him out. The name, El Rey, the king, was, of course, inevitable. It was as apt and as made to order as Percival. And just as surely as Percy in converse measure, Ellery would have to make good on it. And that was all right too. He had been through it before and could take it again; he knew that a new man had to earn his standing.

His first real trouble was his own fault for not knowing enough of what he was up against, the common fault of millions of sturdy young Americans just a little mite over-confident in their ability to handle themselves in any company.

The "back pasture" was ninety acres of high wire-fenced grass land. The "one-year-olds" were no gangly calves for rodeo roping, but lusty young bulls of the fighting breed, ranging up to two years and sometimes a bit over. Great sleek black beasts, untried as yet for



There was no time to dodge.

their mettle, not yet teased by man to the point of hatred, but surly and of smoldering temper. The job for these embryo buckaroos, not yet risen to what Manuel rated "full man's work," was no more intricate than to herd the dumb brutes to fresh grown pasture and to keep them from fighting amongst themselves. Just like that.

Mounted always. No man would venture into the herd on foot. Whenever it became necessary to dismount for any purpose the man in question kept a very sure hold on the halter of his wiry little pony. A snort from a nearby bull or an undue showing of eye white, and the man would vault quickly into his saddle and wait another opportunity to do the interrupted chore.

Of uncertain temper were those young bulls. At times it seemed that one might smack one of them on the flank or kick him in the nose with a stirruped foot and head him off in the required direction. At other times some irritable beast seemed to be looking for some excuse to lose his temper; and when once infuriated, would charge at everything in sight that moved. Mounted men had to rely upon the speed and quickness of their ponies to avoid the thundering rushes.

Ellery suffered from his inherent bull-dogger's scorn of "cow critters." Weight for weight, these young bulls were no bigger than a good rodeo steer. Only—and Ellery did not take this into account—they were not roedo steers.

A smooth-muscled black beast was acting contrary. It just would not go with the rest of the herd. Ellery yip-eed and rode at it, cracking the heavy thonged whip the herders used about its ears. But it remained stubborn. Ellery should have known, from the deep rumble in its throat and its rolling eye, that it was in an evil temper. He was not very expert as yet with the unfamiliar whip; its back lash twisted it from his hand.

Ellery cussed a normal streak of annoyance and—well, he wasn't riding rodeo stunts just now, picking up things from the saddle at full gallop; he was on a job. As casually as on a home ranch, he swung from his pony, dropped the

reins over its head, and walked to get the whip.

The warning yell of the nearest rider came at the same time as the bull's grunting cough of effort as it plunged for him. Ellery, stooping for his whip, jumped on all fours, a-spraddle like a prodded frog. Literally so, for a needle horn point ripped a wide triangle in his pants seat and scored a red weal in his buttock.

Landing on all fours, the corner of his eye showed him the bull, between himself and his pony, wheeling with a speed undreamed of in any rodeo steer, to come at him again. The nearest rider was fifty yards away. There was nothing for it but to run for the high wire fence.

To run like an ape with a big black devil thundering at his heels; his torn pant seat flapping a red flag in the wind of his desperate spurt. He made it. Just. Like an ape he scrambled over. And then, with his safety, the laughter broke.

The riders abandoned the herd to lope back through the gate where they could hold their bellies and jeer at him. *"El Rey!"* the crowed at him. *"El Rey de los toros,* King of Bulls."

The close shave of very near death having passed, they let themselves go with the carelessness of familiarity to enjoy the spectacle that the new hand had provided. They improvised on the kingly idea, turning it naturally in the direction of their universal ambition—quite hopeless to all of them—to attain to the glory of the bull ring.

"El Rey toreador." They choked and spluttered, and amended that with derisive exaggeration to the peak of all bull fighting. A *toreador* might be anything connected with the bull ring. Even a red cape player was a *toreador.* But with kingly appellation nothing less than a *matador,* an *espada* of the sword, would do for Ellery.

And then the gang reversed the honor and rated him down through all the grades of the sport. *Banderillero,* a man who plants the beribboned barbs, *picador,* a fellow on a seedy horse, *chulo,* a mere assistant, and finally *mono sabio.*

The *monos sabios,* the wise monkeys, are ornately dressed underlings who lead the jangling mule team to drag out the carcasses of the slain bulls and disembowelled horses. Any of the others in a bull fight *cuadrilla,* if he shows aptitude and unfailing courage, and has a nimbleness of foot sufficient to survive, may rise to the eminence of *espada,* the artist who delivers the final stroke with the sword. But a wise monkey is not a toreador at all; he is a mere groom of mules, a cleaner out of stables.

ELLERY could take it, and did. But these men, with a certain Latin ferocity, carried the razzing to an extreme that went beyond the American conception. They kept exasperatingly to it; kept it up for a week. They imported friends to be told the tale of how the Americano climbed the fence like a monkey, *como un mono yerbal,* a grass monkey, which was a hypothetical something even more ridiculous than a respectable monkey of the jungles. They beseeched Ellery to demonstrate his trick all over again, even —with belly gripings of laughter—to take down his pants and show them his lacerated rump.

Crude to the point of ferocity. But that was the kind of men they had to be to hold the jobs they held.

Ellery could see that this was no longer just fun. There was meaning behind their persistence; they were trying him out, the Americano, the foreign interloper. Ellery knew that the time had come when he would have to establish just where he stood amongst them.

That, too, was something that he had been through before. There are some like that in any man's camp.

He had the weight over any of these lighter-boned Catalans, Tough hombres, Manuel had warned him. But El-

lery, looking them over through hard eyes, knew that he could whip any one of them. And what would that prove?

But this was a thing that, as inevitably as a chore of work, had to be done. Ellery took it as a chore. He hung his hat carefully on a barb of wire and took in a couple of holes in his belt.

"All right, fellers," he told them. "There doesn't have to be any hard feelings about this, but you're callin' for it an' I'm comin' to scratch. I'm goin' to smack the heads of the two best o' you at once an' plentiful. You two. You're the loudest; an' happen so, about the biggest too. So get ready to take it."

They would have faced him one at a time; they weren't afraid of anything. But two would make a more novel sport; and since this ebullient foreigner so challenged them, the two were willing enough, and no idea of unfairness ever came into their heads. If a man made a challenge, it was up to a man to make good on it.

The two made a mistake; they should have come with knives, the tools they knew. But all the world today knows, through moving pictures, that when cowmen fight, they use either guns or fisticuffs. Not one of these men had ever owned a gun, and moving pictures do not teach practical fisticuffs.

So Ellery smacked their heads as thoroughly as promised. He drove a heavy fist to the bigger man's diaphragm and sent him down with a cross to the jaw. The other man was more nimble; he dodged about Ellery with the expertness of one trained to dodge lunging horns. But presently he dodged not quite fast enough and went out cold with his partner.

It was when their friends revived them that they came up again, dizzy and loose-kneed, and pulling their knives. But Sanchez stepped in.

"*Basta!* It is enough. *Abajo puñales!* Drop the daggers. So the duel was proposed and so accepted. It is finished."

Fantastic, that persistent Old World idea of a duel when men fight. But it has it merits. Honor satisfied. Embraces. No hard feelings.

In actual fact it so worked out. The pair accepted their defeat; a duel, not a licking. "*Es muy bravo,* said the one. *Bravo* not meaning brave, but a tough hombre, and, *muy,* plenty much so.

"And he has an unbelievable swiftness of foot, this Americano. He would do well in the bull ring—if he could ever get his chance."

But the name, El Rey, stuck. It was too apt to let go. Only the shade of meaning to it was different. The Americano had established where he stood with the outfit. El Rey was top dog.

CHAPTER II

A MAN'S WORK

SANCHEZ admitted then that the Americano was no mere foreign clod who had somehow gotten a pull with the boss; he was worthy of instruction.

"You've got to watch out for that bull, *amigo.* He is a *bravo,* that one; the worst in the lot. He will be a man-killer, I tell you."

Ellery still smarted under the indignity that the vicious beast had put upon him; his bull-dogger's scorn for anything with horns was unbroken. He cursed the brute in lurid Spanish and in good cowman Anglo Saxon.

"*Diablo llevelo,* the devil take him an' blast his hide, the big black so-and-so. Killer be damned. I don't rest till I catch an' twist his tail. Damned if I'll let any ornery cow critter best me." He still called them cows.

Sanchez grinned at him. "Not this one, *amigo.* And, for that matter, not any of these youngsters of ours. They are not yet so vicious as the older ring bulls, but with these one must be much faster even than in the ring."

"Why?" Ellery wanted to know at once. Here was something new about cattle.

"*Pues mira!* Don't you know that? What does one learn then in the great ranchos of America? Why, it is quite clear, of course. The older a bull gets, the heavier become the muscles of his neck and shoulders and the less the sweep of his horns. The young bulls can reach out like a mule who bites and they are much faster.

"How far can they reach?" asked Ellery.

"How far? What a question of a goat herder! That depends of course upon the age and the figure of the bull. One knows by looking at it. I can tell within the thickness of my hand just how far every one of my young bulls can reach. So can all the other vaqueros; otherwise they would not last. Stay with me and I will give you instructions, so that you may become a good vaquero."

Ellery was realizing that there were things to be learned before a top hand could become a cowboy amongst fighting bulls.

"And a vaquero of fighting bulls," said Sanchez, "is a profession not without honor and is well paid; for it is really we who teach the bulls that men must be fought with; we must tease them and make them hate us."

The pay was two *pesetas* a day, thirty dollars a month—for worrying bulls to the point of charging a man on foot. Very nearly cowpuncher's wages, at that.

With Sanchez Ellery learned to stand on his own feet before a bull. He learned to wave a rag in an angry yearling's face and to run like a rabbit before it, dodging aside at the end and letting the animal charge blindly through the fluttering cloth. He began to understand something of the close insight that the born vaquero had into the individual nature of each animal. By the look in the beast's eye they could tell whether it would follow the rag or would have sense enough, as a canny bull now and then has, to turn after the man.

He learned about the goad, which was no more than a stout stick with a short iron point to it.

"Here it is that one thrusts with the point when an animal rolls his eyes at one who is mounted." Sanchez showed a hand-breath of space on either side of the shoulder. "Here passes a nerve cord that is tender. The animal, feeling the prick, will either back off, or, if he is very angry, will heave up against the irritation and so will swing short with his horns. It is exactly in this spot that the picador in the ring must thrust his *garrocha* in order to save his horse from hurt. But it is difficult to find the exact spot on a charging bull, is it not?"

Ellery learned, too, that a piece of fluttering rag by no means had to be red. Any contrasting color—as for instance a clean white shirt—was sufficient to invite the suspicion and dislike of a lusty young bull. That lesson was another close escape. Something of a surprise it was to the vaqueros too, who had never known a clean white shirt.

THERE was a thrill to this game that beat anything in rodeo work. A man could get hurt doing a rodeo stunt, and often enough did do the wrong thing with some cantankerous steer. But this was a business of gambling your life against your own close accuracy of eye and speed of foot, never the same cut and dried routine with different animals.

They were individuals, these bulls; like all highly bred killers with their own particular tricks and idiosyncrasies of murder.

They had only one point in common, all of them—the morose, dogged courage that kept them always coming, whether befooled or beaten or blinded by stinging whip lashes across their eyes, trying doggedly to get their man as long as they could stand. Bull courage—that was

where the expression came from. The courage that held them dying on their feet in the ring, that forced a grudging admiration for the sheer cussedness of them, that swelled a man with pride when he could pit his skill and his puny force against such beasts and win.

Ellery could understand how, to any red-blooded man of Spanish tradition, to be a bull fighter was the acme of glamor and hot adventure. To stand on foot with a piece of cloth in your hand and divert a needle point of horn an inch from your chest; that called for skill and a courage as cold as a bull's was hot.

With the others Ellery saved his miserable *pesetas* to ride every so often all night to Barcelona city and thrill to a real fight. Not in the magnificent *Plaza de Toros Principal* with its blue and orange tile façade and its Moorish cupolas, where the big names of the profession fought. They couldn't afford that. But to the little plaza of the *novilleros,* where the novices who had not yet earned recognition showed a daring in proportion to their ambition—and, of course, got killed much more often.

Fans they were, dyed in the wool, and they sat on the hot benches of the *Sol* (bleachers) and yelled advice and derision and threw rented straw cushions and other people's hats into the ring in their excitement. Noisier, more boisterous by far, than American fans; only these vaqueros were no college theorists; they knew from their own active experience every turn and play and hairsbreadth risk of the game. They knew some of the bulls, from their own rancho, knew their idiosyncrasies, and Ellery found himself, along with the others, cheering some furious brute when it outguessed its man and spun him high in the air.

But his American tradition left him cold to the kill. He could admire, with held breath, the supreme nerve of the matador who must lean between lowered horns and drive a lightning fast sword up to the hilt into a space no bigger than his hand between the big shoulder bones. But, "Seems a pity he's got to kill so fightin' a beast," he said.

Sanchez turned on him hotly, *"Me da rabio.* Now that makes me mad, the squeamishness of you people. There is no logic to it. It is a clean kill with a sword, is it not? Life gambled with life. You will go out with a gun in your country and kill a deer, giving it no chance and taking no more risk than perhaps to catch a cold in your hideous climate of the autumn; and you proclaim that a sport for your hardiest heros of the outdoors. And this, not? *Pero amigo, qué burla!* What a laugh!"

Ellery could find no argument to that.

"Guess maybe you got some right too," he admitted.

"Bien maldito. You are damn right I have right. A gun is a gun; its technique is the same always; you guess your distance correctly, you hold steady, and, *basta,* it is finished for your deer. You guess incorrectly and it is finished for the wounded beast not so quickly. Here is a different technique for each animal; you guess your distance or your time one fraction wrong, and it is finished for you. Do not make me silly arguments, my friend."

It was that individual idiosyncrasy of reach and length of horn and cunning that made any bull so dangerous. Any man could learn to gauge the speed and direction of a machine, like an automobile, and could stand at a street intersection and let its sharp fender edge whiz past his stomach. But no man could know, until he had tried it out, whether a bull, tearing in fast as an automobile and with nearly half its weight, would prefer to hook with its murderous left horn or its right; whether it would blindly charge the fluttering cape, or whether it would cunningly know that a man was hidden somewhere behind the cape. And it was only an inch that made all the difference.

THAT sleek black brute that had so nearly got Ellery—*Cola Horcada,* Old Fork Tail, they called him—was the most devilishly cunning of the lot. Its temper was implacable and it knew that a nimble-footed human did not remain where a flaunted rag lured. Its eyesight, too, was better than some. Most bulls of the fighting breed have poor distant vision. This one seemed to know what it wanted and went after it. It was into its third year now. A splendid, sleek-coated animal, black as a devil, with great tossing-muscles arching from shoulder to head. Time to test its mettle.

Don Alavarado de La Palma always came out himself to overlook these tests. It was his pride. No bull would ever come charging from the *puerta de toril* with the Palma colors pinned to its shoulder unless it had already shown itself to have the three requirements of a bull; speed, temper, and gameness.

He saw Ellery.

"Ha, the cowboy Americano. So he is still here. Is he any good with these bulls of ours, Manuel?

Manuel shrugged. "Sanchez reports that he has speed of foot and a hair-straight eye. I would say he is almost good enough to do a full man's work."

"Oho, so? Well, we shall see. I have always understood that these cowboys have courage. Perhaps we shall be able to promote him."

Almost good enough to be a regular buckaroo. "Blast his gall!" Ellery swore to Sanchez. "I'll show him. Old Fork Tail—when his turn comes, he's mine, see?"

"You want to put Fork Tail through his trial? *Por Dios!* You're crazy. You know he's the worst one we've got. But still—" Sanchez' ears and shoulders gestured together. "You are as fast as any man here. Why not you get hurt as well as another? No one of us will fight you for that bull."

So men on horseback, *manaderos,* whose function was much the same as hazers in a rodeo, worried Old Fork Tail till his tail lashed his flanks and the deep rumble in his belly was a vibrant feel in the air, muffled but menacing like a smoldering volcano.

"Temper, he has," Don Alvarado exulted. "A beautiful one. Let us see how he takes the man." He nodded to Ellery. "All right, Americano, show what a cowboy can do."

Ellery slipped from his pony, a red cape in his hand. A hazer took up the pony's reins. Ellery stood alone, on his own feet. He had done the same sort of thing before, but the cold crawling in his stomach—where the horns rip past—that every man has who faces a fighting bull, was as pronounced as the very first time. He did not have to "call" Old Fork Tail, to incite him. The bull saw him, alone, on foot. It exploded a short bellow and launched its bulk forward as fast as a quirted mustang.

Ellery knew, of course, that a bull doesn't charge with its head down. It charges head well up so that it can see. That is the time to hold your nerve between grim teeth and make no foolish move, to let the thundering bulk get set in its direction. It is within the last yard, when the bull lowers its horns for the vicious toss, that the man must dodge.

Ellery watched his time to the fraction of the split second and passed the bull to the right. That is to say, he held the *capa* steady with outstreached arms and slipped his body to the left. At the same time he flicked the cloth high, so that the outcurving horns, flinging up with force enough to throw so puny a thing as a man for twenty feet, missed his chest by half a foot and hurtled on under the billowing cloth.

"*Sanctissimas!* Not to the right! Sanchez yelled advice. "He hooks with the right horn."

Any bull can stop his most ferocious

impetus within seven steps; a young and not so heavy one, within five or six.

Fork Tail plunged on sliding hooves, turned and loomed fearsomely near through his swirling dust cloud. He wasted no time making up his mind for his second rush. With a snorting grunt he was in again.

Ellery passed him to the left.

"Bien hecho!" Sanchez shouted. "Clean foot work, but you're cutting it awful close."

But no word of approval came from Don Alvarado or Manuel, watching impassively from beyond the fence.

"Almost good enough to be a buckaroo." Ellery grunted. "Damn, I'll show him."

He passed the next immediate rush to the left again and turned the bull fast. Instead of flicking the *capa* high over the horns, he fluttered it along low in front of the bull's nose in an arc, drawing the bull, lurching and grunting rage, after it.

This time, with teeth hard set, Ellery snatched his handkerchief half out of his breast pocket and got set to make the pass for the right hooking horn. He had seen José Medina in the ring let a bull tear the gold braid from his embroidered jacket. True, that had been a dumb, honest bull that charged blind through, like a locomotive on its tracks; no tricky brute like this one. But Ellery's dark face was set in a darker scowl. "Almost good enough, huh!" A continuous muttered grumble of words and profanity, exactly like the furious bull's, came from him. "Almost fit to handle cows, yeah? I'll show these jaspers."

The bull, having wheeled, charged a second time, its eye whites suddenly fearsomely large and bloodshot. Ellery could see the pupils; nothing blind about this one. His heart was in his mouth; his feet, alert as a cat's, feeling out the sand beneath them. He knew that he would have to hold his left foot firm for this and draw in his right as his body swayed clear, just enough, just at the right moment. It called for nerve, for the unbelievable nerve of a *torero* in the ring.

Ellery had nerve—even Manuel who thought he was almost good enough, admitted that. Nerve that could hold the nerves iron steady against all the self-protective impulses of nature to flinch. Ellery had that kind. The black bull hurtled past; the right horn hooked viciously; its point lunged past Ellery's chest, picked up the corner of the fluttering handkerchief and tore it away, tearing the pocket with it.

IT was crazily foolhardy. Pure bravado taking an awful chance to prove—what? But, "Almost good enough." The careless words burned Ellery up.

"Pretty! Ah, pretty!" Don Alvarado clapped his plump hands. "This cowboy has a judgment of eye that is superb. But he is a fool. That devil will get him. It is enough. Let the riders draw him off."

Manuel signaled. The hazers rode in. But the bull was already on its furious return. Ellery, his stunt pulled off, passed it easily to the left.

But this bull was one that learned fast. Three trials had showed it that the elusive cape fluttered always over its horns. This time it flung its head high; a horn caught the cloth tore it from Ellery's hands. The puny man was left with nothing to dodge behind.

The *manaderos* yelled and raced in. The bull, each plunge forcing a savage grunt from it, was round on Ellery. He kept his head, bit his teeth hard, waited for the lowered horns and spun on his heel out to the left. The only thing to do.

Many bulls have a tendency to shut their eyes at the moment of the toss, a natural gesture of self protection. Those are reckoned easy. *Rabiando ciego,* the toreros call them, blind mad, and with

them they can make a great show for the public. This Fork Tail was one of those dangerous ones who looked at what he was doing.

Ellery felt a stunning smash on his shoulder, went down rolling like a kicked dog. Then the *manaderos* were in and smothered the bull's vision in billowing capes. Ellery was able to get up and run for the fence, not so badly hurt that he couldn't feel the blood flowing and the wind blowing across his suddenly naked back.

Manuel took him into his expert hands for quick inspection. He wiped the blood from the gash with the grimy heel of his hand and ran a hard thumb along the shoulder bones. "*Tinctura de iodo.*" He growled and cursed Ellery with the appalling irreverence of Spanish objurgation. Don Alvarado came to look critically. He nodded; said approvingly.

"That was a very neat piece of work. I should say he reached at least fourteen inches with his swing, don't you think, Manuel? This bull will be a very great credit to us."

Vaqueros made Ellery bend over, poured stinging iodine into the broad gash straight from the bottle, slapped wide stick tape over it and tied it up with strips torn from a once white sheet that would have thrown an ambulance interne into a faint.

The other tests proceeded with only one other casualty, a minor one, no more than a bruise. Don Alvarado sternly put thumbs down on seven out of eighteen tested bulls. No real fighting fury; too slow; stupid. Only the best would carry his colors into the ring. The seven would be set aside for breeding, for they came of good stock, and ferocity might well be transmitted through the next generation. The boss went away with Manuel, comparing notes, discussing.

Sanchez found time to come to Ellery, grinning.

"You would try him. I told you he was bad. But you knew that yourself. However, I will say this: There are some of us that he would have killed."

Ellery was furious and said it profanely and loud.

"May a hundred devils sear him! Twice, Sanchez! That's twice he's got me. Holiest shoes! I'll get back at him yet. I don't know whether I've ever said it before, but I ain't lettin' any ornery cow critter best me. I tell you, I'll kill this black devil."

Sanchez grinned wide and shook his head.

"Not this one, *amigo*. Our Fork Tail has passed as a *Toro muy Bravo*, our worst in many seasons. He will be worth several thousand pesetas. Not you, my friend, but some one of the greatest bull fighters in the land will kill him—if indeed he doesn't kill all of them first. You have said it, he is a devil."

"Well, gol durn it then, I'll go and be a bull fighter. Whoever's going to kill this devil will be me."

Sanchez laughed at his rage.

"*Pues mira el matador!* You want now to kill a bull, yes? You, who always were so squeemish against the sport. It is a blood lust you have, no."

But Ellery's *amour propre* was not to be laughed away. He had to justify his anger.

"Th' hell with sport. Don't you see, Sanchez, this dang thing is a matter o' my own self-respect now. *Almost* good enough to rate a vaquero—me, a top hand! An' this critter shows me up a monkey. Twice. Just like he knew an' thought it out in his black skull an' laid for me personal."

Sanchez nodded gravely.

"Yes," he agreed. "This one can think. He will be a killer. But not for you any more. He will kill bull fighters."

"All right." Ellery insisted doggedly. "I'm going to be a bull fighter. I'll show them. An' there's no future in this lousy vaquero job, anyhow. Not even cow punchers wages, to let hell-tempered critters chase us around an' tear the hide

off of us; an' us not allowed to sock back at 'em, on account they're slated to get killed by somebody else all dressed up in hooraw an' spangles. Well, I'm tellin' you; I'm goin' to be the somebody else."

"That would be fine." Sanchez nodded, twisting his mouth ruefully. "Which one of us would not willingly trade his soul to the Wicked One to be a bull fighter? But to be a bull fighter one must be of the upper classes and have influence with the president of the *corrida;* or one must have money and graduate from one of the licensed bull fight schools with a diploma; or one must pay a premium to some big matador to be taken into his *cuadrilla.* So," he shrugged resignation. "For the likes of us, *no hay esperanza,* not a hope in the world."

"Danged if I hold with that." Ellery growled. "There's plenty *esperanza* if you get after it. I'll bust in somehow. You see."

Sanchez shrugged again. "Perhaps, with money." He brightened. "And who knows, *amigo,* money may come our way. We are promoted. Manuel told me. We go to the training paddock as full vaqueros. There will be pickings. For," his grin was impish, "I will tell you a secret. Some of the *matadors* who are not so sure of themselves, having been gored once, do not hesitate sometimes to send a quiet agent to inquire about the individual tricks of our bulls that have been slated to fight."

"So? Promoted, yeah? Good enough at last to rate a full buckaroo." Ellery remained grimly resentful.

"Yes, we follow our Fork Tail to the paddock. Perhaps you will get a chance to twist his tail and so your honor will be satisfied."

"Not that easy it won't. Twice he's taken a quart of my blood. I owe him for that. Personal."

CHAPTER III

BLOOD AND SAND

COMING into their fourth year, were the bulls in the training paddock. Great heavy-necked black brutes—all the Palma stock was jet black—hand picked for speed and implacable temper. The job was much the same as in the back pasture, only more so. Mainly to keep these lusty young animals well fed and at the peak of their health and strength, from fighting each other or anything else in sight.

It was a job, as Manuel had said, that required real vaqueros, men who knew bulls and their moods. As carefully bred as race horses, these irascible black brutes had as many separate humors. And all the time, unceasingly, they were to be bothered by the men who tended them, ingeniously worried by men, so that their natural inbred dislike of men would be stepped up to a burning passion of hate.

That was why they were herded in small paddocks, where fences would be close at hand for the men whose pay had been raised to all of forty dollars a month to go in and worry them.

But no more cape work, no waving of cloths and dodging from behind. They were not fools, these fighting bulls; it required very few trials for them to learn their errors. A bull must come into the ring innocent of all the tricks of man. Otherwise the man would stand no chance. It is only his human wit in outguessing and befooling the bull that lets him survive.

It is an axiom of the *corridas:* "A bull may not be fought twice." Because, in once, it has learned. That is why a bull, once in the ring, must be killed. If the first matador cannot do it, then the second must take the sword; and, failing him, the senior alternative. A bull, once in the ring, is up against its stark fate.

On the other hand, as a bull must not know the tricks of man, so no torero—no honorable one—should know the tricks of any individual bull. There is a fine drawn sense of fair play to it all.

Ellery was the hand picked ideal for keeping at least one of the bulls good and mad. He couldn't come anywhere near his enemy, but Fork Tail would charge and chase him sprinting for the nearest *barrera*, the short double-walled alleys built of heavy woodwork, too narrow for a bull to squeeze into.

And, through some queer animal telepathy, Fork Tail's hate seemed to be transmitted to the other bulls. Ellery dressed like the other vaqueros in blue shirt and leather overalls; he was burned by sun and wind as lean and hard and brown as they; he smelled like them of stables and sweat and strong black cigarettes. But Fork Tail knew, and the other bulls knew from Fork Tail.

Ellery's life was one precarious escape after another by the bare thinness of his shiny leather pants seat.

"I'll kill that son of a devil," he raved, as Manuel and Sanchez on their fast ponies drove the snorting brute off and released him from a shelter *barrera*. "Gorramighty burn me if I don't. No ornery cow critter's goin' to—"

"*Oye*. Hear him!" Manuel jeered. "Our Americano has a vengefulness as fierce as a bull's. But be satisfied. Our *cola horcada's* killing is slated. He goes to the *corrida* in Barcelona for the fiesta of San Estéban."

"Huh? Next week, that will be." Ellery's enmity found itself facing a sudden blankness. No Fork Tail to quarrel with would leave a comparative tranquility that would be almost monotony.

"Next week." Sanchez reviewed the program as quickly as any baseball fan. "That will be matadors Morero and Gonzales, with Gaetanillo and Paez as their alternatives if they should be hurt."

"And Felipe Morero at least is a good man. *Cra!* This looks like it will be the end."

"Yes, this will be the end for our old devil Fork Tail. Either Gonzalez or Morero will kill him for you and give you your satisfaction."

But Ellery was all hot at the thought.

"What satisfaction will it be to me to know that somebody else has killed him? This is my personal quarrel with that brute. Twice he's got me. I got a right to make a comeback, haven't I? An' now it's some stranger gets the chance."

Ellery had learned, along with the many other things that the vaqueros had taught him, to shrug, but not with philosophical acceptance of what fate handed to him; there was resentment in the heave of his shoulders.

"Shucks, this is a lousy business." He frowned. "Sanchez, I'm gettin' out o' this job, into the ring end of it, where I can do my own killing against my chances o' gettin' killed." His moody eyes scowled into space. "An' countin' chances, maybe Old Fork Tail's got some *esperanza* too. He's got guts, that black devil has. Perhaps—" Ellery's eyes, almost hopeful, lit with an inner picture; his lips, wordless, ruminated over a thought. He shrugged again. "*Quien sabe?*"

Sanchez' grin was as eager as a wolf's. "True, *amigo mio*. He is *muy bravo* and he just might win his life. It has been done. We must surely see this fight."

"Yea-ah!" Ellery breathed. "We must. But this isn't just an ord'nary bull fight for us, Sanchez. We got to see this right, from good seats."

"We should indeed. Go with the gang and give Old Fork Tail a good last send-off. But that would cost a month's pay."

"I got an idea," said Ellery, and told Sanchez.

"You've got a gall," said Sanchez.

SANCHEZ, nor any of the others, would have tried it. The inhibitions of their social inferiority, born of their European background, barred even the thought from them. But Ellery, Americano, couldn't see any rhyme or reason to that.

"Hell, I'm free, white, and twenty-one, ain't I?" he said, and he rode into Barcelona city all dolled up in what he called his passport clothes and demanded to see Don Alvarado.

And the plump little man, in his sanctum, turned out, as before, to be human. It was only about his bulls that he was cold-bloodedly ferocious.

"Aha, the cowboy Americano. You have a persistence that amazes my servitors." He laughed. "And shocks them. You will smoke one of my *cigarros*, no. They are from the Vuelta Abajo of Cuba and very good. So you are not dead yet. I thought, from the chances that you take, it might be likely. Now what is it that you wish?"

Ellery told him.

"Oho?" Don Alvarado's brown fingers drummed his desk. The idea was a novel one, never presented before. "Ss-so? My *palco*, my private box in the Plaza Principal? You have an independence, my Americano. Still—" He considered his cigar end. "You have a reason that is understandable. Hm-mm."

"It would be a great favor, señor. We have worked well to bring those bulls to their perfection of temper."

"So. And you have a private enmity with this bull, Manuel tells me." His black eyes shone pride. "That is a grand bull, is he not? Worthy of any man's hate. With any luck he may add a man or two to our record. Much would I like to see him work, but a business calls me away. So you hate him, and with those rascals of mine you would like to see his finish?"

"Well," Ellery did not quite subscribe to that. "We'd shore like to see this fight."

"He will make a grand fight, that one. And," Don Alvarado decided, "*como no?* Why not? But"—he pointed a quick finger at Ellery—"you will not disgrace my box? One does not throw beer bottles, mark you, from a private box. Jewelry and money and, from the ladies, fans and mantillas perhaps. But no boorishness. *Bueno*, I will write an order. You boys, who know this good bull, will cheer for the Palma colors."

And so it was that the vaqueros of La Palma sat in a box in the grandstand, right down front, just above the barrier, and directly below the official box of the government-appointed president of all Barcelona bull fighting. Every move, every play, whenever possible, would be made at their very feet.

They were self-conscious, those boys, amongst all the gentry. They spoke in whispers, pointing out celebrities. They even forebore—for a while, until their excitement took them—to garnish their speech with the cheerful blasphemies of colloquialism.

In boxes around them sat the upper classes, caballeros, stiffly formal with their women folk in public. The women came dressed in fiesta costume of high comb and mantilla; the shawls, worth many hundred *pesetas*, some of them, were draped over the box fronts to draw envious eyes and direct attention to all the family jewlry. And it was true, as Don Alvarado said, some of this would undoutedly, in the frenzy of excitement over a bold play, be thrown to the hero matador, whose assistants in his *cuadrilla* would pick it from the sand while he took his bows. Along the edge of the barrier were arranged the barbed *banderillos*, two feet long and ribbon-wrapped with the colors of the matadors whose banderilleros would place them in the bulls' shoulders.

A spectacle as gay and as formally exhibitionist as a diamond horseshoe at the

opera; the wealth and beauty of Barcelona come to see an enthralling show—but by all means first to be seen.

The *salida,* the grand entry, gorgeously appareled municipal officials, was a spectacle to cheer. Straight up to the president's box the pageant came; and it seemed almost, when the chief *alguacil* addressed the president in the balcony above, that the sonorous formal speech was directed at the lowly vaqueros. The *alguacil* made a flowery speech, the president made a speech to declare the games open; the key of the *toril,* when the president threw it down, passed directly over the vaqueros' heads. Ellery might almost have jumped up and caught it.

There was a preliminary thrill in that like sitting in a box exactly behind the catcher at the home plate. A thrill again in recognizing close before him the faces of the big ring heroes he knew so well by reputation and rotogravure print but had never been able to afford to see.

There was Felipe Morero right in front of him; his short blue satin vest massive with embroidery, his tight knee breeches braided two inches wide; silver buckles on his shoes, silver ribbon in the pigtail knot on his neck. Morero was a matador of the first order. He might essay the stunt of standing on a handkerchief for his second bull today, depending upon how well the men of his *cuadrilla* had played it and disclosed its tricks within the fifteen minutes alloted time.

Behind him, two abreast, walked his troupe, their embroidered *capas de lujo,* their show caps, dragging in the sand. Morero had made a fortune out of betting his life against death and could afford to hire the best of the up-and-coming novices and to dress them in a manner to honor the public who supported him.

There was Gaetano the Gypsy and another lithe youngster who would place the *banderillos;* behind them cape players, *chulos;* between them picadors on horses not such scarecrows now, since the king's edict of 1928 provided them with protective padding; behind them the *monos sabios,* dressed like whitewings, with their jangling mule teams.

A spectacle of blue and gold and silver on hot yellow sand; orderly, dignified, wrapped in tradition; the dark faces of the men stern, grimly suggestive of the motto of the bull ring, "Remember Death."

And there was Gonzalez, the other matador, with his troupe, orange and silver. A good man too; he had shown his courage in many a ring. But something of a bluffer was Gonzalez, and crafty.

"I'll bet he don't draw Fork Tail," Sanchez leaned over to whisper to Ellery. "He knows how to fix it so he gets easy ones, so that he can put up a lot of flourish for the foolish public that doesn't know anything about the game. A good bull like Fork Tail would chase some of that swank out of him."

"And that's the holy truth," another one laughed. "His signature wouldn't be so bold for a while that he writes on his photographs for the fine ladies."

"Yeah, *quiere Dios.*" Ellery was almost pious in his wish. "And what's more, Sanchez, I'll bet you neither of them gets him. Fork Tail is mine."

All the vaqueros laughed. "A bull, once in the ring, his number is up."

"*Bien cierto.* Like the chicken in the kitchen."

"Unless," Sanchez said, "he puts up so good a show that he might win his life. It has been done."

A BLARE of a trumpet signified that all the speech making was finished at last. The pageant filed out as it had come. Slow, dignified, formal. The crowd tensed. Now was to come action—and, haply, blood.

The Gonzalez cuadrilla returned. As

senior matador, he drew the first bull; and his luck—or whatever it was—had it that he had drawn right.

The bull came out from the *toril* gate with a rush and a roar, like a vast black missile from the inferno, bellowing in mad rage at the prick of the beribboned barb that fastened its rancho colors to its shoulder.

It snorted out of its uproar in surprise at finding a chulo suddenly standing invitingly before it fluttering a red cape. With a rumbling roar it hurled its near half a ton of massive bone and muscle to obliterate the outrage. The man gave it a run half around the ring, then let it catch up with his trailing cape held at arm's length and drew his body gracefully aside while the animal heaved its shoulders and fore legs clear off the ground in a murderous upstroke at the empty cloth.

It was a good opening display. The crowd cheered. The bull pulled up short in a flurry of flying sand; bellowing anger, it whirled after the man again. Just as the man had expected. He had made his cape play close to the five-and-a-half-foot wall of the ring. He timed himself perfectly. As the mass of meat and brawn hurtled forward he kept ahead of it just enough to reach the barrier and to vault lightly over it. The bull, baffled, crashed a thick horn into the solid wood with a splintering thud that shook the heavy structure. The crowd cheered again. Ladies clapped their hands.

But the hard-boiled experts in the Palma box only grunted.

"Ha, that is a foolish one. He will but hurt his thick head and will tire himself in no time."

Other chulos with the cape played the angry beast in a series of futile rushes. Its great sides heaved and it began to be less eager to charge at elusive humans.

The president gave a sign. A trumpet blared for the next act, the *suerte de picar*.

The entrance gates opened and two mounted men, their horses blindfolded, rode in. They kept close to the barrier, presenting only the left, the padded side, of their mounts. A cape man played the short-sighted bull close to them and then suddenly rolled up his cloth and disappeared from view behind a *barrera* ally.

Horses were more solid material than the nimble-footed humans. Snorting its rage, it thundered down upon the nearest. The rider, a lean, alert young man, dropped the point of his lance neatly upon the handbreadth of space over the shoulder nerve and held firm.

This *garrocha* was a stout pole of ash tipped with sharp steel and equipped with a wide disk guard so that it could not penetrate more than a couple of inches. Just deep enough to shock that nerve.

The charging bull splayed out its fore feet and stopped dead. The clever picador relaxed his pressure upon his weapon. The bull roared and plunged forward once more. The man's arm stiffened. Furiously the bull swung up at the belly of the horse. Once, twice, thrice. Left, right, left. Each time short. Almost howling its rage it drew back. The picador spurred his steed and trotted on. The crowd cheered wildly. It had been a brilliant piece of lance play.

The maddened bull caught sight of the other rider. Another tormentor. Like a black avalanche it rushed upon him. This one was not so lucky. His lance fell six inches from the vulnerable spot. The bull never hesitated. Its horn clanged against the rider's steel leg guard, slipped beyond, and thudded up to the root into the padding.

Horse and rider were heaved clear off the ground by the terrific impact and fell in a sudden heap. Chulos rushed in, bewildered the bull with their capes in its face and led it away in a thunderous chase. Others helped the shaken man and horse to their feet.

The trumpet blared again for the *suerte de banderillar.* Chulos played the bull while the unhurt horses were let through the exit. Men were taking the gaily wrapped *banderillos* from the barrier rail and testing their balance.

The bull snorted at this new annoyance, but it was too out of breath to commence immediate hostilities. On the other hand the men could not afford to let it regain its vigor; their function was to exhaust it. The first banderillero stamped and shouted invitingly twenty paces before its face. It merely rumbled in its stomach at him.

This was getting nowhere and was losing time. Gonzalez signed with a nod of his head. Obediently the man ran forward to take the initiative. The crowd tensed. This might be dangerous. It would require skill to make the bull show his move. A mistake in judgement would mean all the difference between safety and applause, and a ripped open stomach.

The *banderillero* knew his business. Within four feet of the deadly horns he checked his run just a fraction of an instant. It was exactly the necessary invitation. The bull plunged forward and lowered its head. Good, it would swing with the left horn. The man leaned over, planted his two darts, one on either side of the shoulder, and skipped to the right. The bull swung viciously and missed his waist line by six inches. Then, feeling the sting of the barbs, it bellowed and pounded after him. Men with red capes distracted it. Once more it stood with heaving flanks.

Another *banderillero* invited its onslaught. Six such barbs had to be planted. Planted by hand, not thrown. Their function was to let the matador observe the bull's idiosyncrasies at close quarters before he would take his turn for the most skillful and dangerous maneuver of thrusting a sword through tough hide and gristle, through the perilously narrow space between backbone and shoulder blade, down to the beast's heart.

ELLERY was watching Gonzalez with frowning intentness. It was not in the adroitness of cape and barb players with a bull that he was interested; it would be matadors who would play the final act with his enemy.

The expert critics with him were impatient. "The trumpet should blow and command the *suerte de matar,* whether he has the six darts or none. But that Gonzalez knows the right people in the right places. See, he is stealing the opportunity for his chulos to play the bull a long time between each *banderillo.* It will be too tired to stand before he takes his turn. This is not bull fighting."

All this was true. The trumpet blast seemed to be unnecessarily delayed. Somebody was being very lenient with Gonzalez. But it came at last, when the bull would stand for the most blatant insults from the cape.

The bull stood panting in the center of the ring. Bareheaded, the matador stepped up to it. It was too tired even to bellow a challenge. Gonzalez was clever enough to work fast and to get the credit of making his kill without first trying the bull out with *muleta* play, as was his privilege.

He fluttered his *muleta* once in the animal's face, right and left. Bewildered and tired, it stood head low and front feet together. Exactly the right position for a spectacular dash in from a few paces away and the stroke *á volapié.*

In this position, with the fore feet level and close, the space between shoulder blade and heavy spinal ridge is at its widest—as much as two inches perhaps. A fast man of sure aim—as Gonzalez, give him credit, was—could run in, strike with the speed of a snake and step back all in the flash of time before the bull could recover from its surprise and respond to the attack.

There was danger, of course—blood-chilling danger—for to make a fair, clean stroke to the heart requires that the sword be thrust right up to the hilt; and what brings the cold sweat to a matador's brow is the knowledge that the reach of his arm and sword hilt are less than the distance from the bull's shoulder to its horns.

Gonzalez had his courage, all right. He stood in profile, his sword at eye level to take his aim. He caught the bull's vision with his *muleta* in his left hand, leaped in well over the spreading horns, struck and leaped out.

The bull stood exactly as it had been before. Between its shoulders protruded the hilt—the hilt only—of the sword. The bull swayed, spraddled its legs and thudded to the ground. A fair kill and clean.

The spectators cheered, stamped, whistled. Gonzalez, dignified, unruffled, walked to the barrier and bowed to the lady to whom the bull was dedicated. A purse arced over the boxes and fell at his feet. He didn't even look at it; one of his men would pick it up. The crowd cheered again and shouted *vivas* for Gonzalez. A fine show.

But the hard-boiled ones only grunted. "Silly fools." "Show off." "He'd never do it with a good bad bull."

Ellery was smiling thinly.

CHAPTER IV

DEATH DANCE

THE mule team jangled in; the wise monkeys fastened a rope to its horns, jangled out. Peanut and candy vendors circulated. The people relaxed and post-mortemed the first act. The trumpet blared again. The Morero *cuadrilla* took possession of the ring. Another bull charged from the *toril* gate.

It was much the same performance as before, only faster with Morero's men. The vaqueros sat blasé, looking furtively about them at the aristocratic beauties. Till one said suddenly:

"Eh eh! *Mira alla!* Look there. Here is an amateur risking a show-off before his girl."

A high-spirited youngster had jumped the barrier and was running with a piece of red curtain goods to engage the bull. It was prohibited, of course; but every now and then some hot blooded lad would do it; and the professionals, sympathizing, would often enough let him make a few passes before drawing the bull away from him. The public always thrilled to the foolhardy stunt as much as any circus audience would thrill to an amateur breaking into a high trapeze act; and the youth would be a hero amongst his fellows—if he survived.

This one was no miracle. Just a youth who had nerve and had somewhere contrived to pick up some practice. The regulars let him make three passes and then took the bull away and herded him safely to the gate into the arms of a waiting policeman, who would take him to the lock-up, where he would spend the night and would the next morning be fined the prescribed hundred *pesetas* by a magistrate who had probably seen him him do his stunt and admired him his nerve for it.

The show proceeded. Felipe Morero despatched his bull with neatness and no accident. Gonzalez' turn again. Ellery, half out of his seat, was staring at the *toril* gate, chewing on tight lips. The *toril* gate opened. The dark void remained blank. No hurtling avalanche charged out. For a moment, nothing. And then a great black bull trotted out and stood in the sunlight. It stopped and looked about, taking a survey of the ring.

"Ah-ah!" a voice breathed. "That is a bad one."

And then Sanchez was gripping Ellerys' arm. "Look! Death of God! Look at that! Old Fork Tail!

Carr-rr-amba! how did Gonzalez ever come to draw him?

Ellery's set face grinned like a Zuni devil mask. He said:

I went back to the *toril* before the show an' scared the foreman there'd be trouble if the drawing of bulls wouldn't be on the dead level, an' damn if the tickets didn't fall right."

"Look at that devil," a vaquero said in an awed voice. "No mad charging about for him."

"That's our Fork Tail all right. May a saint curse me if he isn't standing there, thinking it all out."

"*Canastos!* Yes. This, *amigos,* will be a bull fight."

FORK TAIL trotted out, a black menace in the yellow sunlight, vibrant with power. The rumble in his belly was ominous.

A chulo advanced warily with his cape. A vaquero, stirred by memories of his own perilous experience, suddenly jumped to his feet and screamed:

"Look out for that one. He hooks right."

"Shut up!" Ellery dragged the man down. "That's for him to find out."

Fork Tail let the man advance—as he must, or be jeered out of the ring. At ten paces he launched himself. The man's mind had taken in the warning. He passed the bull left, safely; and every vaquero knew that he said a silent prayer for that. His pass made, he could, with honor, run, though not with dignity. Fork Tail chased him into a *barrera* alley and stood blowing hot rage where he could not enter.

Other cape men came, backing each other up cunningly in pairs of threes, playing to bewilder the bull. But Fork Tails anger was as individual as a man's. He picked his man, went for him and kept after him right to the barrier.

The people cheered for the good bull. "*Qué bravo!* Magnificent! Look, he goes after the man, that one, not for the cape. Death of a saint! This is a killer."

Vindictively, one after another, Fork Tail chased them scuttling over the barrier, and they would sidle back through the little doors, looking sheepish. The crowd hooted them.

But they soon tired of that too. They came to see men take their chances with brilliant cape play. But the men were too wary of this bull to take chances. The crowd began to stamp and call for action. "Go on. Get busy, you dressed-up monkeys. Get him." They wanted blood.

The picadors were brought in. But Fork Tail was not interested in horses. It was men he hated, puny two-legged things that teased him for four months. Men lured him, running like deer, and disappeared into the barriers, leaving him close in front of the horses. But Fork Tail, rumbling his rage, only snuffled mightily into the narrow shelters. Horses were thrust at him. He only snorted steam, rolled a red eye at them, and refused to "accept" any animal other than man.

The show was beginning to be slow. The bull was so fast and cunning in its open-eyed attack that the men didn't dare take the close chances that thrill the crowd. Its very viciousness made the bull unpopular. The crowd booed and whistled.

"Go on, get done with him. Kill him and get him away. Let's see some bull fighting. *Adelante el Matador!*"

"*Espada!* The sword! *Suerte de matar!*" The shouts became insistent. Policemen moved amongst the benches. "Hear the rats squeal," Ellery growled.

The banderilleros came on the scene. Fork Tail charged them with silent fury —he was not a "talkative" bull. They took appalling chances, but not a man of them was able to plant both his barbs fairly with both hands at the same time, as they should, well into the gristle of the shoulder so that the bull's plungings

couldn't shake them out. Three banderillos, instead of six, dangled in place.

The men worked desperately. If they couldn't slow up that furious black bulk before the matador had to take it, his play would be with close death. A more inexorable preceptor than the president was creeping up on Gonzalez. Time. Fifteen minutes. Within fifteen minutes the bull must be dead, or the whole *cuadrilla* disgraced.

Gonzalez knew how to steal extra time. He had already gained priceless minutes. But there was a limit to how long even an excited crowd could be stalled.

The president shrugged; he had done his best; and it was the business of bull fighters to look close into the eyes of death. He signed for the trumpet blast for the *suerte de matar.*

Gonzalez—give him always credit for iron courage—took a new sword from its case and walked out.

All the men of his troupe deployed about him with ready capes. He did not send them away, as a matador has a right to do, to stand in the limelight alone with his bull. Two men were keeping the bull in play. A woman's voice screamed in sudden hysteria. Gonzalez decided to risk everything on a sudden bold attack, to forego all his brilliant tricks of *muleta* play that had made him an idol; his desperate hope was to surprise the bull, reversing its previous experience, carrying the attack to it.

The crowd hushed, holding its breath. In just one more second there would be blood—somebody's.

THE cape men left the opening. Gonzalez caught the bull's eye with his *muleta,* profiled just a split second and leaped in to his stroke.

The rage in Fork Tail's undaunted heart responded to surprise with the only thing he knew—attack. As Gonzalez lunged, so did the bull. A woman's voice screamed a high drawn locomotive whistle note. The springy steel struck gristle and bone. It spun, glittering high in the air. Beneath it, cartwheeling, was Gonzalez.

Cape men rushed in and practically blindfolded the bull with their clothes. It plunged on, shaking its wicked head to rid itself of the clinging folds. Men raced to pick up Gonzalez and rush him to the hospital that is an adjunct of every bull ring. The spectators could see his yellow satin breeches riped from knee to groin and a sudden flash of white bone beneath, before it was blotted by welling red.

Ellery was on his feet, shouting above the clamor. His back to the ring, hand raised, he faced the president's box and demanded that the bull be given its life for putting up as brave and furious a fight as had ever been in a Barcelona ring.

The president looked down to him and seemed to be considering the thought. He turned and spoke with officials in his box.

The vaqueros caught on to Ellery's scheme that he had planned so hopefully. "So does *esperaza* work, yes." They clamored with him. "*Toro el mas bravo!* The toughest bull there's been! Life! We demand reprieve!" A few voices, fair-minded took up the cry.

But Fork Tail had not been popular with the mob. Fierce, yes, but he had not given a good show. Not his fault; the wary men hadn't given him a chance to make a show. The crowd booed the closer thinking fans, howled them down.

Blood on the sand. They had seen it and they wanted more of it.

The president shrugged. One *matador* having failed, the next must go out to the kill.

Fork Tail had the ring to himself, triumphant and vengeful. Men stood along the edges of the ring, ready to duck into the shelters. Felipe Morero, with

a white, set face, took his sword and *muleta* and walked out.

Ellery sat, as white and as tense. But that intangible thing to which he hung on so doggedly, *esperanza*, a thin and tenuous ray of it, stiffened his back.

"I don't care." The words grated through his close bitten teeth. "I'm not scaring any. Fork Tail's got too much damn ornery guts to let himself be killed by this one either."

Sanchez remained unconverted. "Aye, it has happened that a bull has gotten past two *matadors*. But after them come the alternatives. It is a bull's fate."

Felipe Morero hung the short *muleta* over his sword. That would give him a little more length to play the bull. And play it, he must, for it had time to rest. He must at least get it winded before he would dare to take his desperate chance with a bull as cunning as this one.

He went in on light toes, like a dancer. The bull grunted its take-off and charged. He passed it left, turned it, plunging fast after his *muleta*, and passed it again; and again. No fancy tricks, just keeping the bull in furious action. His own skill would try to wear down that mass of brawn and muscles while he conserved his own energy.

He moved little; his skill was uncanny in keeping the bull plunging about his own sinuous figure, while he was always on his toes, watching for his chance.

But Felipe Morero's chance never came. The devil in Fork Tail was growing more cunning with each miss, cunning enough to charge for the *muleta* and then swing aside at the man. And presently Morero's flitting feet were not quite fast enough. A swing caught him —not with the point, with the side of the horn across the chest as the snorting head went by.

Morero was knocked rolling as Ellery had been knocked once before—like a kicked dog. Only, not so lucky as Ellery, he rolled and lay still, all the breath knocked from his body as though hit by a derrick boom.

CAPE men, tense on their toes for almost certain accident, flung their cloths about the bull's head. But Fork Tail had already caught on to that trick. Instead of plunging blindly about, he had seen where his man was and plunged for him with the same savage one-mindedness that he had shown all through his fight. It was a question only of how soon he could shake the clinging cloths from before his vision—and when he did, there would be his man somewhere close at his feet.

Cape men rushed with more capes. Some tried to drag the inert body away from under pounding hooves. It was a mad scramble around the heaving black bulk and the wildly swinging head with its deadly pale amber horns—one of them clotted red—sticking through the enveloping cloth. Something hit somebody and he screamed. Women's voices echoed it piercingly. Pent breaths escaped in a long sublimated groan—not of horror, out of sheer taut throats.

Ellery jumped from the Palma box; three long hops to the lowest tier, and from that he jumped the barrier into the ring. In all that crowd he was perhaps the only man who knew how to do anything that might hold the bull.

He reached the scramble just as the bull shook the last of the cloths from his bloodshot eyes. Men scattered from before it. Old Fork Tail, coming out of his frenzied rage of impotence, seemed to recognize Ellery as his arch enemy of old standing. He "spoke" then for the first time.

A short explosive bellow roared from his throat and he hurled himself, all four feet clear of the ground, at Ellery.

On the instant of the stinging spurt of sand from under the front hooves Ellery spun on his heel, as once he had done before—only this time, far enough.

The swinging left horn missed. Fork Tail's furious impetus carried him on. Ellery continued his spin and hurled himself as fast as the bull, feet clear of the ground, with curving fingers clutching for the murderous horns. He felt his palms grip with the old comforting smack of the safe and sane rodeo days.

Fork Tail spoke again. He roared his rage at this new trick of hated man and plunged on. Ellery's grip held. His body swung like a pendulum under the heaving black head that tossed madly to throw the clinging weight. Like a bulldog that grips a bull by the nose and hangs on, flailing the air—but hangs on.

"Life! We demand reprieve!"

Fork Tail's roar of rage swelled to a mad roar of hysteria all around the arena. Sobs, screams, hoarse shoutings, thundering of boots upon benches, and the piercing locomotive shriek, at regular intervals, of the overwrought woman.

Sanchez' yell came high pitched.

"*Bravo, El Rey!* Hold him! *Dios,* what a play with death! *Esplendido!*"

The other vaqueros took up the frenzied howl. "*El Rey de Toros!* Stick with it! *Viva El Rey!*"

The crowd caught on to the name. "*El Rey!* Look at that fellow! *Muerte!* What a courage! Hold him! Oh, *qué hombre!*"

Ellery found time to get his feet under him. He took off and swung his whole weight under, dragging on the left horn. Fork Tail plunged and bucked on.

The crowd was delirious. Nothing like this had ever been seen in a bull ring. It whistled, shouted, gave mad advice.

ELLERY'S muscles were cracking under the strain. He felt the sudden surge of his heart into his mouth as his fingers began to slip on the right horn that was clotted with Gonzalez' blood. It that would let go there would be just one end to this fight.

But the great snorting head was coming round. Slowly, fighting every inch of it. Not by any means all the way over; no human muscles could twist the tremendous neck of a fighting bull; but enough to drag the nose sidewise. Ellery desperately tried his old trick of tangling up the bull's feet. Fork Tail bellowed through a straining throat and slowed to a stop. Front feet braced wide apart, head twisted, so that the screaming boxes could look into the red rage in his eyes.

And that was as far as either could go. Man and bull, locked in a grim battle of stamina—and of the two, Ellery knew that his muscles could never outlast the bull's. His breath came in gasps that hurt; the bull snorted steam.

A man ran with a cape.

"Hold him, *hombre.* Just another second. Just so."

Ellery only nodded, his teeth bitten into his lower lip. He could feel the salt taste of blood. The man, greatly daring, wrapped the cape about the bull's

eyes; wrapped it well, twice, and knotted it.

Ellery's fingers let go. He fell to the sand. Fork Tail, in his fury and energy unabated, backed and plunged about the ring in mad muffled rage.

The Ellery could hear the madder yelling of the crowd, could distinguish the *vivas,* the shouts for *El Rey.* It had seemed to him an hour that he had hung on with cracking muscles; his fingers still couldn't uncurl themselves. But he saw Felipe Morero only just now being carried out, and behind him another figure all red and gory.

Unsteadily he limped to the barrier. The boxes still swam before his eyes, and—damn it, why did these cape men all cluster around and crowd him so? Hell, he could walk on his own feet without stumbling, if they wouldn't hit him on the back like that.

In front of the president's box he stood and raised his hand, just like a matador taking an ovation, and reiterated his fixed idea of demanding the bull's life.

The president was smiling down to him and nodding. The crowd temper had swung completely around. Blood. They had seen it on the hot sand; three men hurt, one of them maybe mortally. A show! A magnificent show such as they had never seen before. An incredible man. *Viva El Rey!* A brave bull. *Viva el toro!* A reprieve! Give it life!

So the president made a sonorous speech and conferred upon Fork Tail, who had showed himself to be a *toro muy bravo,* his life and the right to be retired to his home ranch for breeding. Great honor would be Fork Tail's in the stud book; honor would accrue to the ranch that bred him; honor to the owner of the ranch.

The people shouted and clapped and gave *vivas* for the president. The mob had demonstrated its fair mindedness and its stern mercy and it was very pleased with everybody and everything. Objects fell about Ellery: hats, tortoise-shell combs, purses. He didn't know at first what they were and he ducked. The people laughed at the Americano foreigner who didn't know what an ovation was and they threw more. *El Rey* was their hero of the hysterical moment.

Sanchez and the gang came crowding over the barrier; and the police didn't beat them back. They surged about him.

"Blood of God, you did it! You have converted us to your unbelievable creed, we who said there was no hope. But what a stunt it needed! What a victory, such as has never been seen in the ring!"

Ellery was not in a good humor. The falsity of mob adulation rankled. He growled ungraciously at his friends. "Victory, hell! This round was a draw; an' that only because help came. That black devil has got me twice; an' this time he's mashed my foot all to a pulp. I tell you, no ornery cow critter is goin'—"

They laughed at him and took him joyfully in their arms. Sanchez said:

"Since he goes back to the ranch with twice as much value, I don't see how you can ever get even with our Old Devil Fork Tail. But if you say so, may a devil bite me if I don't believe you will."

THE *corrida* proceeded, tame after the heart-stopping show that had been. A message came to Ellery that Felipe Morero presented his compliments and his apologies that he could not just now wait upon his deliverer in person, and he would esteem it an honor if the Señor Americano would condescend to visit him in the infirmary and would accept—

"Blether." said Ellery. But he went.

The matador was lying on a cot, swathed like a mummy around his chest and back. Through an open door could be heard the furious swearing of Gon-

zalez coming out of ether while they still bandaged his leg. The third "accident" was nowhere in sight.

Ellery was gruffly embarrassed at the thought of fulsome thanks. Stony faced, he expressed polite condolences.

Morero surprised him. "Some ribs, they tell me," he said with the calm acceptance of a man who had been hurt before and expected to be hurt again. And as for fulsome thanks: "*Señor,* I am indebted to you. I will be honored if some day I may be of service.

Ellery warmed to the matador. Man to man talk, no fuss to make a feller feel foolish.

"A service, señor, would be easy. I wish to be a bull fighter.

Morero's eyebrows went up into the peak of his hair. He laughed—and coughed painfully. "A bull fighter, eh? You are already a fighter of bulls with your hands; and you wish to do it with *espada* and *muleta*? Well—" he tried to shrug, and coughed again—"they have told me that your speed of foot and hand is phenomenal. So you would like to study under Felipe Morero?"

He did not put it into words, but in his intonation was the proud implication that to study under Felipe Morero was an honor sought by the most ambitious novices in the land, and refused to all but the best who had already showed promise that they would be a credit to their teaching.

Ellery understood nothing of it. Genuinely he said: "That's just what I'd like a whole lot."

Morero smiled. "I am glad it is so easy. *Bien,* it is arranged. You are my pupil. Tell me your history; how you have learned to do the thing you did."

Gonzalez was carried through the room on a stretcher, cursing appallingly and insisting that he be brought before the president of the *corrida* that he might save his honor.

Ellery wondered just how he could do that. He found out when he went back to his friends. Boxes and bleacher benches buzzed with excited talk. The name of Gonzalez was in the air—no condescending laughter about it, only approbation.

"The man has a courage. He is not beaten, that one. And he has a right, certainly, to redeem his honor. Why not? And, friends, what a fight that will be! All Barcelona will witness it."

THE vaqueros, dismayed, yet excited, told Ellery, babbling all at once.

"Gonzalez. He came back on a stretcher and he made a noble speech to the crowd. This bull, he said, had taken his honor from him—from Annibal Diego Gonzalez, who had never failed to kill his bull in the ring. And while he was still fainting from his wound, he demanded the rght, as soon as he would be well, with the first *corrida* of next spring, to meet this same bull in the ring again. So the people cheered for him—did you not hear it in there?—and they cried that the president should take back his order, pensioning Fork Tail, and should give Gonzalez the privilege of winning back his honor; and the president—"

Ellery, gritting furious curses, jumped to his feet to protest, but slumped back. What use? The games were finished. The people had clamoured their volatile will. The president was leaving his box.

When Ellery knew no more cuss words he said doggedly at last: "I don't care. I'm not scared any. Gonzalez can't kill Fork Tail. Fork Tail is for me."

The others remained bound by their inbred convictions.

"Let us agree, you made your own luck; you will be a bull fighter. *Pues y qué?* And so what? Does that guarantee Fork Tail to you? A cape player you may become; a banderillero perhaps. But matador? You, who are American?"

"*Y como no?* Why not an American?"

"It is the tradition." They had a curious pride about that. "It is tradition that only one of Spanish blood can have the heart, the *animo,* to kill a bull with a sword in his hand."

Animo was a vague word that, in bullfighting, meant dash, courage, and admitted a certain bloodthirsty ferocity.

"Only a Spaniard. Yes, yes, there has been an American, we know, but he is one out of a million and a quarter of people. This El Rey of ours, he is *hombre muy bravo,* but—you remember, he winces about the horses. And even if you should have the stuff of a matador, *amigo,* would that give your Fork Tail into your hands?"

"Sanchez is the only one of you guys," said Ellery, "who doesn't give a belly-ache."

CHAPTER V

"Moment of Truth"

FELIPE MORERO'S winter place was no school for budding novices. It was, rather, a training camp for the members of his own selected troupe, for their continuous practice so that their every performance before the public would be an honor to the *cuadrilla* Morero.

There were barrack-like living and sleeping quarters, none too comfortable. Not a bath nor a plumbing gadget in the place. But there were corrals and barns and a sand-floored training ring complete in every proportion and detail.

Ellery learned some of the things he already knew all over again and a hundred of which he had never dreamed. He learned the formalities as well as the tricks of cape play. Certain *farols* and flourishes must round out a properly executed move. Certain tricks, such as turning a bull too quickly so as to wrench its spine, were poor sportsmanship—all right for small time players perhaps, but not for the *cuadrilla* Morero. And the *aficionados,* the real fans amongst the public, knew good play from tricks of that kind.

Footwork was an item as important as to a fencer. Not just how to dodge a bull's charge; but how to do it with that lithe grace of hips and pointed toes that just missed the driving horns and forced applause with the gasp of the breath. Young bulls with blunted horns were used, and mistakes meant broken ribs.

And then practice with a buttoned sword at the precise spot on the shoulders of a tethered bull. But before that; before ever facing a bull—like a fencer who must practice his advance and lunge against a dime-sized spot on the wall—came hours and hours of practice at the skeleton bones of a bull.

Morero would lecture to demonstrate. He would arrange the feet in different positions to show exactly how the open space between shoulder bone and spine shifted with each move; how a man must judge his angle and strike accordingly.

Ellery was fast, and his eye, as he had already shown, was phenomenal. Morero approved, but harped ever on his theme of over-confidence from which grew carelessness. A grim reminder that he kept in view always was a series of framed photographs on his arena walls. All the great ones who had made their mistake and had paid their price.

There was Joselito, the greatest of them all, killed by a bull that he should have played just a little bit longer. Gallito, who gave way to the clamor of the crowd to go in and kill. Gaetanillo, who bet he would stand on his lady's handkerchief and not be driven from it. Felipe Morero knew them all and he took a grim joy in telling his pupil the history of each and then demonstrating the error.

AND so the winter passed and spring came around and the first *corrida* of the season. All the newspapers were full of it. Gonzalez, ferociously resolved to make

his great comeback against Fork Tail, the bull with the terrific reputation. Like a champion race horse, the sport pages ran photographs of Fork Tail with his owner, Don Alvarado. Don Alvarado gave proud interviews, telling how he had bred this bull that had won him a record of three men in the same ring.

And the Morero *cuadrilla,* as before, would be assigned to play against Gonzalez; and Morero had with him, as one of his alternatives, that mad American, El Rey. Who could tell what might happen on this great day? Anything could happen. This, *Señores aficionados,* fans of the bull fight, would be a show! And the prices, gentlemen and ladies, would be only double.

Morero was soberly serious. Ellery grinned at him. "Don't worry, *patrón.* Gonzalez can't kill Fork Tail. He was scared of him the first time, an' that bull can remember enough to know he's got his number."

Morero smiled bleakly. "That is just why I do worry. I, too, was scared. And this Gonzalez is foolish. His reputation demands that he play up to his public, and here he is, barely strong on his feet yet. But—*qué Diabo,* such is the life of a bull fighter."

The day of the big fight jammed all sporting Barcelona into the *Plaza de Toros.* A heavyweight championship grudge fight. There would likely be blood battered from somebody.

Sanchez, of course, was there, wonder in his eyes and tense excitement at the prospect of nobody knew what to come.

"*Qué tal, amigo?* What about it all? What do you propose to do? This will be the final, will it not? Whatever you plan, I want to go and bet on it."

"Yeah. The last round." Ellery was as bleak as was Morero. "I don't know what's goin' to break. But you can bet on this: Gonzalez won't kill Fork Tail. Fork Tail is mine."

The preliminaries dragged. The speech-making and the pageantry were attended by talking in the benches and shufflings of feet. They loved it normally, the gentry and the lower classes and the lesser castes and the hoodlums alike; but they were all keyed up today to a high pitch of expectation.

"Gonzalez looks pale, no?"

"*Cierto,* why not? The same bull that got him once. Twice in the same ring."

"Nor does Morero look any too happy."

"And look, that is El Rey, the third behind him. They say he has a personal grudge against this bull."

"He is a wild man, that American. If Gonzalez gets his, and maybe Morero too, who has also been laid out by this devil of a bull, who knows what may come?"

"Hombres, I would not miss this show for my wife's heritage."

Three bulls came and did their roaring, thundering stuff, and died. Just bulls. Both matadors let their alternatives handle them. Prelims, that was all.

And now the arena hushed. Now was coming what they all waited for. Gonzalez, bare-headed, made a speech to the official box. He spoke of his honor that this bull had taken from him. He thanked the president for having given him this opportunity to win it back. He turned and thanked the people for having supported his plea to the president—politician to the core. He was glad to face this *bravo* bull again. He would do his best.

"Damn if the guy hasn't got his guts," Ellery said. "I'm sorry for him."

The trumpet blared. The *toril* gate opened. Fork Tail came out, rumbling already in his belly. This was nothing new to him now. He knew what would happen. He, too, would do his undaunted best.

The Gonzalez troupe had been trained like a football squad. They played the bull in pairs, in threes, in relays. Teamwork. No man had individual tricks of

his own to win applause. They were playing for the team.

The public stood for it. There were whistles and catcalls from the hoodlums, of course. But they were waiting for Gonzalez with the sword, waiting for the fate-ridden "moment of truth," when the split half of a second would decide whose blood it would be that would glisten red on the sunlit yellow sand.

All of twelve minutes of fast play. The team kept the bull on the run, all the way across the ring to the barrier after his man and immediately back again after another. They didn't offer him horses; they knew that his temper needed no encouragement to get his horns into something. His great sides heaved; his breath came in hot lungfuls that could be heard to the farthest bleachers. He was more tired than he had ever been in his life. But he remained perilously fast.

Time up. Gonzalez stepped out with sword and *muleta*. The crowd howled a *viva* for him once and then, on seat edges, held its breath.

FORK TAIL thundered down on him. He passed the bull. Wide. Very wide.

"Ha! *Cruces!* Sanchez grabbed the arm of a man next to him, a perfect stranger. "By the Cross. He is nervous! Look at him. He will get it."

Again the bull tore in. Again Gonzalez escaped. He was panting as hard as the bull.

A fan with opera glasses cried out. "He sweats, *por Dios!* It glistens on his forehead."

"Aa-ah!" A breath went up from the crowd. "He must finish it soon. Or else." Gonzalez was drawing the bull round him in circles, to dizzy it. The bull made a fast turn, stood with head lowered, ready. Gonzalez thought he saw his chance. The bull moved. Gonzalez hesitated a split second in indecision. Then he went in.

Just a split second too long. Nobody saw exactly what happened. The bull plunged forward in attack to meet attack. A meaty crunch was heard. Gonzalez was down. The bull plunged on over him.

The team rushed the bull *en masse* Smothered it in capes before it could turn and locate its man. They got Gonzalez away. A red smear remained on the sand. First blood to the bull.

Ellery was gripping Morero's arm. His eyes were alive with fierce resolve, his voice savage.

"Let me take this, *patrón.* Give me this bull."

"You?" Morero stared at him. "Why, you have never killed yet. I can't let you go in. I must first break you in for the kill on easy bulls that are sure; not on a ramping devil like this."

"Give him to me. He and I, we have a war to end."

"But my dear man! This is no bull for a novice—nor for an old hand, at that. Listen to that crowd. That clamor is enough to make the most experienced man nervous."

"Yeah. Listen to the wolves howl for blood."

"Yes, blood. Yours or mine."

"Not yours. This bull is mine."

"But consider. I talk to you as a friend. You stand at the beginning of a career. You have a rich future before you as a bullfighter. You have all the qualities to become one of the great ones of the game. You can't afford to risk all that just now. One defeat at this stage, before your reputation is secure, will ruin you. You will be just another nobody who kills bulls in little provincial rings."

Ellery was shaking the man with his arm as a lever. "Listen, Morero. Listen to sense. If anybody can take this bull, it's me. I know the ornery cuss. I've watched him grow. I know every trick he's got. Hell, I know how he thinks."

Morero stared through a fierce frown.

"Watch, you rats. Here's how your Joselita died!"

His slow nod began in half inches and grew to the full motion of acceptance.

"Perhaps you have sense. But you are quite mad all the same. Yes, maybe you are the man. You are the fastest I have ever had. And the public would accept El Rey where they would not accept any other alternative in my place. So, well—" He shrugged. "I will tell you the truth, *amigo.* I have no yearning to go out for that devil of a bull." He shook Ellery's hand. "*Vaya con Dios.* With God."

A *matador,* once a bull has been assigned to him, has the right to dispose his cape men about him as he will—as Gonzalez had disposed his team. Ellery waved all his anxious friends back.

"This is just him and me." He told them. "It's a long standing argument between us."

"But, *compañero!* This is not a bull to fool with. You have seen. Let us at least—"

"Him and me." Ellery repeated. "It's been a long time coming. I've seen it for months. I know this critter's tantrums from the ground up. I'll make a monkey outa him."

They shrugged. It was the privilege of the *matador* to take his risks in order to win his reputation.

"But you are quite mad, none the less," they told him. And they repeated Morero's blessing. *"Vaya con Dios."*

Ellery went with profanity and his unblooded sword and unspotted *muleta*. The crowd accepted Morero's substitute with a surging roar.

"El Rey! *Adelante,* El Rey. That is the one who fought that devil with his bare hands. Go to it, Americano! Go in and kill him fast!"

Ellery ought to have acknowledged the reception. He ought to have bowed all around, or at least to have saluted the official box with sword held high. He did none of them. The safely yelping crowd, that ordered him to take his life in his hands and kill quick for their bloodthirsty pleasure, only angered him. All the response he gave was to mutter, "Wolves!"

Fork Tail, standing in his savage silence, alert for what men might do to him next, saw Ellery. He "spoke" to him; bellowed what might be a joyful challenge to battle and came charging for him all the way across the ring. Ellery acknowledged that with a tight grin out of a grim-set face.

"Damn if th' old scorpion don't recognize me, an's comin' to do his damnedest. All right. Come on, big boy. I'll run some o' that hot air out o' you. It's just you an' me now."

FORK TAIL hurtled down on him. Ellery passed the bull left, better and closer now than any man Fork Tail had yet met in the ring. He grinned in wide open confidence as he felt his own sure skill. He waited for the bull to turn and passed him again; and once more, easily, with sure cape and catlike feet.

He covered the glittering sword with the *muleta* and lured the bull. "Come on in, you ornery ole devil. I'll show you tricks, by God."

Fork Tail came thundering. Ellery passed with low *muleta* and led him around in a grunting circle—around and around, closer and closer, till the short cape was wrapped around his own waist and the bull's nose was almost touching his tail. Then he skipped away and left the bull dizzy.

The crowd roared delight. *"Cien Santos!* He takes chances, this Americano. That bull will get him if he tries things like that. *Muy hombre,* Americano! Go on. Go to him fast! The sword!"

"Ah, shut up!" Ellery growled.

He stood with folded cape, let the bull charge him direct, spun on his heel, and as Fork Tail thundered by, slapped his rump. Fork Tail bellowed as though hurt.

Ellery laughed with a savage glee. "Yeah, go on, holler, hell's brat. Made a monkey outa me, didn't you? You'll be plenty of an ape before you get yours."

The crowd howled. Bull and man were furious and fast. Brilliant play. But play with a cape began to pall. The man was too sure, too safe.

"Go on in to the kill! *Estoque!* Give him the sword. Kill him now!" With the sword would come blood—somebody's.

Ellery found himself close to one of the *barrera* alleys. From behind him came Morero's voice, quiet, encouraging.

"Don't let the crowd get you rattled. You're showing masterly play. Don't mind them. But, *amigo,* don't take such chances, and watch out that you don't overplay your staying power."

Ellery didn't dare take his eyes off the bull. Fork Tail was pawing the ground, for a moment fixed, making up his mind how to launch his next attack. Out of the corner of his mouth Ellery rasped: "They're not bothering me. They're just rats. Old Fork Tail's got more solid guts 'n the whole yowling gang of 'em. I'd rather stick a half dozen of 'em in a row. Let 'em howl.

"Come on, Fork Tail! You damn buzzard meat. Here's one just for encouragement." He invited the charge with close *muleta*. "You got a fourteen-inch reach, huh? As well I know by the scar on my back that I owe you for. Well, try an' scar me again."

In sheer bravado and lust of battle he drew just his hips away and held his chest for the horn. It hurtled past and took the braid from his jacket.

The crowd exploded in *bravas* and *vivas* for El Rey. But above them came the high scream of Sanchez.

"*Dios!* Don't be a mad fool. He'll get you. You can't do that with him. He'll tire you out and get you. You're slowing up already."

"The sword!" yelled the crowd. *Estoque*. The kill! The kill!"

"Shut up, you coyotes!" Ellery panted. "Damned if I'll kill him on your say-so."

And he was wondering just a little now whether he could kill this bull. Fork Tail was slowing up under his tremendous exertions; but so was Ellery. He was panting hard. Fork Tail thundered back to another charge. His stubborn ferocity was not giving out, if his wind and his sinews were. Ellery passed him, in safety, but perilously close.

"Wow! Almost got me that time, you hellion!"

It was more serious now. Heaving lungs, Ellery knew, could fearfully interfere with sword aim. Fork Tail, too, for the first time was needing rest, standing still, his tongue out, his eyes glaring bloodshot hate—and his front feet close together!

"Now!" came Sanchez' scream. "Now is your chance!"

ELLERY danced in. The handsbreadth spot on the shoulder was in clear view. But a flash of grim admiration for the dogged courage with which Fork Tail faced him disturbed Ellery's reflexes for a split second of hesitation. And in that moment of respite Fork Tail charged in. Ellery got away—just. He laughed savagely between gasps of breath.

"Ha! I could 'a' got you that time, you ornery ole devil. But—"

"*Carr-r-r-amba!*" The crowd exploded again. "He was afraid there! Did you see? *Cien diablos!* I believe the bull has got his number. He's got him scared!"

Whistles came. The catcalls of the volatile fight crowd, ready to swing one way or the other on a single hot impulse.

"Lousy coyotes!" Ellery cursed them between savage gasps. "The bull's a better man 'n any o' you."

Fork Tail was lunging at him again. He got clear by the thinness of the wind that whistled past his stomach.

"Whee-ee!" The mob whistled and thundered with its boots. "Almost, that time! The bull's got his ticket! He'll get him!"

"Blast yore hides!" Ellery's anger was at the mob. "You can't order me to kill him. An' yet, damn you all—" He dodged a lumbering rush. "If I don't, I'm through in this business. Washed up for keeps. You got that much say-so.

"All right. Come ahead, Fork Tail—no? Blown, you big stumblebum, yeah? Well—Ha! Could 'a' got you then again. But I wouldn't give them the satisfaction."

The mob booed and stamped, brayed its anger. "Ya-ah! He lacks courage.

The Americano hasn't the nerve to be a matador. Look, the bull is played out, waiting for the stroke, and he hasn't the courage to go in. Ya-ah! *Le falta el animo!* He hasn't got it. It takes a son of Spain."

"It takes a son of a she-coyote," Ellery gasped as he dodged again. But, "By God!" The thought whirled in on him. "Maybe it's just that. *Animo.* I could 'a' got him twice, like twice he took me. I could take him right as he stands now. But—damn if I don't reckon he's too ornery a tough son o' hell to kill for a bunch o' bloody wolves like them."

He advanced upon the bull again. The mob silenced for a moment. Perhaps the Americano had been stung by their taunts to go in and try it now. And if his nerve wasn't steady the bull might win. Perhaps there would be blood of one more matador on the yellow sand.

Fork Tail, leg-weary and winded, grunted his rage and lunged at Ellery. Nearly got him, this time.

"You got guts all right." Man and bull stood eyeing each other, warily impotent as punchdrunk fighters. "Maybe I haven't got the *animo* of a wolf pack. But they don't razz me into anything, by God. I'll show 'em I can do it."

Ellery feinted like a fighter to the right. Not with the *muleta;* Fork Tail had become too wise to be fooled by that. He feinted with foot and body. Fork Tail swung his head to meet it. Ellery feinted left. Right again; weaving his way in. Fork Tail shifted his feet in confusion, brought the hooves touching, his head low for a toss.

There! He was "fixed" for the kill.

The yelling gallery was hushed. Here was the "moment of truth." A second would show whose blood.

Ellery went in like light. His sword point found the exact spot. It rested there a moment, like a fencer registering his touch. And then Ellery, with a fencer's recovery, lunged back as Fork Tail lunged forward. The horns flashed past his face.

"That'll show 'em!" Ellery rasped. "Show the rats I can do it."

But—foolish Americano—that was not at all what the crowd wanted. Tricks of speed and skill were fine in their place, but they were only the preliminaries to the grim end that the mob came to see.

"Whee-ee!" The whistles rose in crescendo. *"Cobarde!* He was scared to finish! It takes courage to lean over close and drive to the hilt! *Animo!* He hasn't got it. The Americano is scared! He's licked!"

For the first furious second of it Ellery was so astounded by their reaction that Fork Tail's blundering rush tore through the braid of his pants leg before he skipped clear. Then Ellery's rage went all blurry and red in his eyes and he knew that all the hate he could ever hope to have in his system was not for any implacable devil of bull that fought as long as it could stand, but for the wolves who howled out of their safety for blood.

He could have killed the mob, all of them—rammed the sword that they howled to see reddened down their own throats. But since he couldn't, the best he could do was insult them in the deadliest way he knew.

He turned his back on the bull, which stood lowering, wondering what this new trick might be. He lifted his sword high in both hands to catch the gleam of the sun and brought it down, clank, over his knee. He threw the pieces at the yelping benches.

The clamor dropped, suddenly choked off to strained breathing. This mad fool of an Americano had bereft himself of his only defense. Ellery's own voice, when he tried to curse them, was a rasp in his throat. Only the nearest could hear him rave at them.

"Ratones! Swine! The bull's got more guts 'n the whole mob o' you. The hell with yore bloody *animo!* I want none of

it. But, blast yore hides, I'll show you how scared I am. Watch, you rats! Here's how your Joselito died, the best man you ever had. I'll show you how close I'll go."

It was a mad thing that he was going to do, but he was mad enough just now to do anything. He turned on Fork Tail with empty *muleta*, swordless. He played him into position, dizzying him, lifted the great head high to follow the shifting cloth. Then he darted in, slapped the bull with his bare hand on the nose.

So had Joselito died, betting that he would do that trick. But Ellery, though he might lack the ferocity of Joselito to kill bulls, was faster on his feet than ever Joselito had been. He escaped Fork Tail's rush. Escaped the next.

"You don't know it, you blasted ole crow bait," he gasped as he dodged. "But I'm giving you a present."

Fork Tail, grunting unabated rage, lumbered after him. Ellery played him with the *muleta* backing away, till he came to a *barrera* alley.

"The hell with the whole mob o' you!" was his last snarl to the benches.

And then their howling broke loose like so many outraged timber wolves on the edge of safe cover.

WITH a set face Ellery pushed his way fiercely through crowding hordes that hooted at him. Some of the noisiest even raised fists to punch at him. But Ellery's face, when he came within swinging range, was something to make them reconsider.

Morero, the matador, was sorrowful rather than reproachful. "You have not brought dishonor upon me," he said. "Your performance was flawless, a credit to my teaching. You played like the best of the great masters. But a bullfighter must have the courage for the kill. And yet you were not afraid. I do not understand."

"The bull." Ellery said. "Those rats will reprieve him, won't they?"

"But surely. Victory twice in the same ring. Never has been such a bull."

Ellery put his hand on Morero's shoulder. "I owe you an awful heap of apologies, Morero. Some time I'll try an' put it into words."

"I think, maybe, I almost understand now," Morero said.

Sanchez came, blindly feeling for Ellery. His eyes were wet and his voice choked.

"*Amigo mio!* What is this that you have done? You had him. He was yours to take. And—*Dios!* What a calamity! What a misfortune! Now it is all finished, your great career—your future as a bullfighter that you had made with your own two hands out of nothing. *Qué miseria!*"

Ellery pushed him away and laughed.

"Shucks, *compañero*. I hain't got the right makin's for this bloody business. The gang was right. No *animo*. Don't you worry about me. What about your own career? I know you want to be a *conecedor*—a trainer of bulls."

"My career? He can talk about that in a time like this! My career will come. You have shown me that sticking with *esperanza* can bring a miracle as great as yours. You did it. You had your miraculous career in your own two hands, and with both hands you threw it away. What a misery! I do not understand."

Ellery laughed again. "What is important, my good friend, is, is that you're sticking with yore career. Don't you worry any about mine. My career is just startin' out."

"But what is now open to you after such a public insulting of the people? Where will you go that they won't know you and will refuse to give you employment in every *rancho* in the land?"

"I've got a whole lot o' United States to go to," said Ellery. "But before I do, I guess maybe I got a little business to finish up with Don Alvarado."

"He will not see you." Sanchez said.

BUT Don Alvarado did, and listened to Ellery's story, and nodded, and his round little eyes glittered with pride.

"So you see," Ellery wound up. "That ornery, hell-tempered ole devil was plumb too good a bull to kill for those howling coyotes."

"Yes." Don Alvarado needed no convincing. "A grand bull. Five victories in the ring. That Gonzalez will live, they tell me, but he will never fight again. What a record! No other breeder can come near me."

"And I suppose you'll put Fork Tail in your stud?"

"But, my dear sir." Don Alvarado was amazed at the very question. "But of course. That bull is—I hardly hope to breed such another bull as Fork Tail. They happen once in a man's life. That bull, let me tell you, is now the most valuable in all Spain. As a matter of fact, my friend, I am indebted to you for not having killed him."

"I was figurin' somethin' like that," said Ellery. "So—"

"Aha! So—" Don Alvarado was immediately on the rich man's defensive.

Ellery laughed at him. "So I was thinking about this man Sanchez. He's been a good friend to me, an'—"

"Yes, yes. I know him. In fact I have been watching him lately. That fellow has something."

"Yeah," said Ellery. "He has *esperanza*. So I was aimin' to put it to you—if you think you owe me any favors for lettin' your Fork Tail go—an' since your Manuel was talkin' about quittin' work and settlin' back on his farm—"

"Ah, so? You would like to see your friend get a chance at Manuel's job. Well—" Don Alvarado carefully considered the rings on his plump fingers, "why not? He knows the bulls. He would make a good conecedor, I think. He is a good man."

"A very good man." Ellery said seriously. "He burns candles to the saints and he believes in miracles."

Don Alvarado was still wary. "And for yourself. Since you have gained a black eye in your career as a bull fighter, I suppose you wish me to use my influence with the newspapers and with the president of the *corrida* to get you another chance? Well, perhaps—"

Ellery laughed again and stretched his shoulders.

"Hell," he said. "I'm no bullfighter. Hain't got the makin's. I'm just a top hand cowman. I'm headed for Texas, where I guess I'll find just about enough rodeo prize money waitin' for me to start me a nice little career with a ranch. An' my brand—" Ellery's laugh at the sudden thought was sheer delight—"I guess my brand'll be nothin' else but a Forked Tail!"

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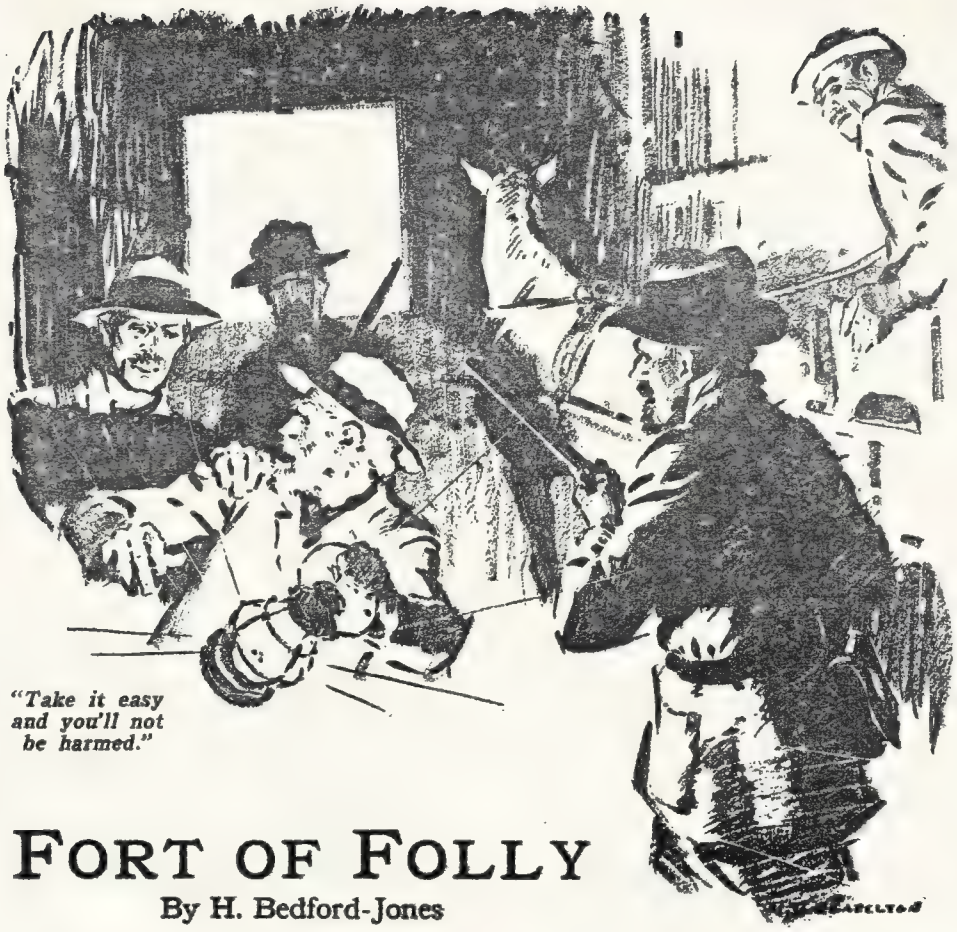


"Take it easy and you'll not be harmed."

FORT OF FOLLY

By H. Bedford-Jones

REMLEY PLATT, trudging along the Boonsboro pike for Harper's Ferry, picked up his pace. This Sunday evening of mid-October, 1859, was shutting in chill and drab. A low sky pressed upon the peaceful land and rain was presaged by the somber dampness of the air. Platt was coming home again from the North with his toes out of his shoes, but he was thankful to be at the borders of Virginia once more.

Long-nosed, rugged, stalwart, Platt swung along the tree-hedged road that wound through the hill country of northwestern Maryland. He had gone away a gangling youngster, three years ago; now he was returning as broke as he went, but a man. Nothing had changed here, except himself.

He recognized the men he passed in the road; some of them recognized him. He delighted in their familiar homely greetings, and those of the free blacks in their Sunday clothes. This section of Maryland held more free blacks than slaves. Over in Virginia the plantations were larger and required a heap of black labor.

"Golly, it's good to be getting home again!" muttered Platt.

He knew every cabin chimney in these parts. As plainly as though he viewed it in full sunshine, he knew the road ahead. It would drop down to the Potomac ahead, swinging to Harper's Ferry by the long railroad and travelers' bridge spanning the deeply bedded river.

There, on the Virginia side, opposite the gap through which the Potomac and the Shenandoah joined in their rush for

the sea, lay the government munitions plant, the Harper's Ferry Arsenal; a clutter of other buildings, the Baltimore & Ohio depot, the Wager House and Galt House, stores, dwellings, eating places. On up the Shenandoah on the south of town was the factory where Hall's rifles were made for the government.

Platt realized that he would not make town this night, as the dusk thickened and rain grew more imminent. He was still six miles short of the Ferry. However, the Kennedy farm was close ahead. He could stop there for the night, and welcome; Doctor Booth Kennedy would remember young Platt—

"Good evenin', suh."

At the soft tones, Remley Platt halted. A tall mulatto had appeared in the road ahead, peering at him, halting him.

"Evening. What's wanted?"

"You're from the No'th, suh?"

Platt laughed. "Yes. From there at the moment."

"Excuse me, suh. I took you fo' a stranger, sho' nuff! Maybe you're lookin' fo' somebody?"

A kindly, friendly inquiry, this; yet something in the mulatto's voice spoke of inner promptings.

"I'm going to Dr. Kennedy's place," said Platt. "You belong in these parts?"

"Yes, suh. The Kennedy place is just off the road, a short piece on. I'll show you right to the house."

"You needn't bother—"

"Yes, suh, but the lane is mighty dark, and I'm known," said the mulatto with gentle insistence. "I can answer fo' you, suh."

As he spoke, the man turned and led the way. Platt shrugged and followed.

"Are they at home?"

"Yes, suh. They're all heah now."

"Do you belong here on the place?" Platt inquired, as they strode on up the narrow lane to the house amid its trees.

"I'm a freeman, suh; belong around the Ferry. But I got wife and chilluns in slavery down South and I mean to free them right soon now."

Queer talk, thought Platt. The lane was dark, tree-girded. The two-story log house loomed ahead, but all dark and silent. Not even a hound dog bayed alarm or welcome. The colored field hands would be in their quarters now, sheltered from the chill. On close approach, light glimmered from the window shutters, from the cracks around the door, and a hum of indistinct voices reached Platt.

These voices ceased abruptly at the sound of footsteps on the porch. The mulatto rapped sharply on the door.

"It's Newby, Cap'n. I've fetched some'un from the No'th, suh."

A scuff of booted soles. The latch clicked, the door swung with a burst of light and the freeman stood aside. A huge figure bulked upon the threshold with a sharp command.

"Come in, come in! Be quick."

The sense of something wrong here struck Platt; startled, blinking, surprised, he could not retreat. He passed inside, and his guide followed. The door was slammed.

THIS was not the Kennedy family, or the Kennedy sitting-room either, as Platt remembered it. The lamplit room was bare of furnishings, save a deal table and a rickety chair or two, supplemented by boxes and trunks. A dozen men were sitting about—several whites, others colored. Not a one known to him.

The man who had admitted him was a stranger, too. An elderly man, ranging about sixty, rawboned and powerfully built, with a bristle of frosted hair brushed back from a sloping forehead. His ruggedly chiseled face was made long by a grayish spade beard that spread over his coat front. Large gray eyes under thatched brows, deep and penetrating, fastened on Platt in surprise.

Something had gone wrong. Newby explained hastily.

"I fetched him in like I was told,

Cap'n, suh. He come from the No'th and he was aiming fo' the Kennedy farm, he said. I reckoned he was another of us."

The old man's voice drove at Platt, intoning like that of a preacher.

"Are you looking for someone here?"

"Yes, for Dr. Booth Kennedy. Isn't he here?"

"They tell me he died two years back. I've rented the farm from his widow. I'm Isaac Smith." By his accents, the old man was a Northerner.

"My name's Remley Platt, Mr. Smith. I'm on my way down to the Ferry and aimed to stop the night with the Kennedy's. I didn't know the doctor was—"

"You live around here?"

"I was raised in Jefferson County, Virginny, but I've been up North for a spell. Reckon I've made a mistake," and Platt smiled. "I'll say good night and get on to town."

A mistake? Yes. There were sounds elsewhere in the house. People were in the loft above the room. The premises breathed of mystery, of interrupted preparation. Platt noted revolver-bulges under the coats, heavy rifles leaning in the corners. Negroes here, more upstairs.

The truth flashed on Platt. These men were using the Kennedy farm for running slaves out of Virginia, on up to the North and Canada. A station of the underground railroad, eh? He must get word to the Ferry about this. But now the old man, Smith, was speaking. Speaking more gently, yet with a shocking firmness.

"I'm truly sorry, Mr. Platt, but you can't go on to the Ferry right away. This man of Daingerfield's made a bad mistake—"

"Oh! Now I remember you." Platt gave the mulatto a look. "You're Newby—yes, house boy for Captain Daingerfield of the arsenal. You're in bad business here, Newby. You know what'll happen to you if you're caught."

The mulatto eyed him sulkily. "I don't aim to be caught. The cap'n don't aim to let you go to tell on us."

Platt turned to the old man. "I reckon you-all are stealing black property, eh? When the folks at the Ferry hear of it, they'll make things hot for you."

"We don't recognize black property or any other human property," said Smith. His eyes were aglow like gray stars. "You're of a slave-owning family?"

"My father didn't own slaves, but he was a Southerner. So am I."

"And bold about it. Well, we need not argue; the argument will be driven home very shortly. You've seen too much, sir; you'll have to stay here, and we'll take you with us to the Ferry. Once we're secure there, you'll be released unharmed."

"You're going to the Ferry?"

"Yes. And I'll tell you plainly our business there." The old man straightened up, and a fanatic light came into his face. "We're marching to seize the Ferry and the Arsenal, liberate the slaves, and establish a free republic in the Southern mountains until the entire South yields its theory of human bondage!"

Platt stared. "You—invade Virginia, seize the Arsenal? And you expect to get out of it alive? Why, you're crazy!"

"We'll do it without firing a shot, except in self defense," said the other, more calmly. Platt was conscious of all the men around, of their eyes on him. "I hope we shan't be pushed to it; I'll arrange so we shan't be. It'll be a stroke to shake the slave-owning South. A host of voices will applaud—"

"Glory!" Newby, the mulatto, broke in with ecstatic fervor. "Praise the Lawd! But please don't let this man go, Cap'n, suh."

"Why, you men are stark, staring mad!" exclaimed Platt. He could scarcely credit his own ears. Seize the town, the arsenal, march out again, rouse the blacks, arm them? With Charlestown not two hours away, Baltimore eighty miles by railroad, Washington less than

sixty by turnpike, the telegraph ready to flash the news, and four thousand people right here at the Ferry! "You'd need an army for all that. Where are your men?"

"Under the Almighty, we have men enough here," exclaimed the old man sonorously. "More will come at the word, once we have arms for them, and a refuge. Now, I've told you our intentions freely, for we can't be stopped. Shall I make a prisoner of you, or will you pledge me your word not to try to escape?"

Platt hesitated. The glowering eyes around, the arms in sight, all warned him. Best to humor these wild fanatics, or he might suffer.

"You mean you'll take me to town?"

"Yes. You have my word you'll be unharmed and set free. Otherwise, you'll stay here under guard."

"I'll go along without trouble," Platt shrugged. "But the lot of you are crazy. You're attempting the impossible."

"May God open your eyes and mind!" came the reply. "It's not we who are crazy, my friend. We travel an appointed road, we make straight a highway in the wilderness! Take him to the loft, Newby, until further orders."

PLATT followed the mulatto in silence. The loft was reached by a flight of stairs. Here, by lantern light, he saw mattresses on the bare floor and guns lying about, with a bundle of wooden staves pointed with iron. More white men were here and one black, a full-blooded Negro, small, a field-hand by his look.

"The cap'n sent this gemman up heah till we take him to the Ferry," announced Newby. "He ain't one of us, but the cap'n done tol' him what we aim to do, so you-all can talk in front of him."

The men assented. They eyed Platt curiously, discounted him as he took seat on a mattress, and went on with their talking. All of them were young men, under thirty; eager, roughly dressed, capable of mien.

"So we're moving tonight, huh? High time," said one. "The old man's been making ready since early July, and folks around here are getting curious."

"I ain't exactly sure yet what he means to do," spoke up a young fellow, a thin and boyish recruit. "He's close-mouthed about it."

"Grab the Ferry, move down what arms we got stored here, get more if we need them, and march into the Virginia mountains." This was Cook, as someone had called him. Blue of eye, golden of hair and beard, an impulsive enthusiast. "The slave interests run Washington. When we fought for human rights in Kansas, the President sent soldiers and put a price on the old man's head. We'll change all that, and set up a free government of our own."

The young fellow frowned. "I thought we were just going to march into Virginia like you did Missouri, free what men and women we could, make off with them! Listen here, Cook—suppose we don't get clear of the town?"

"The old man says we can. We'll take hostages, see?"

"Huh! Before I left Iowa to join up," said the young man, hesitant, "ma says to me that I'd remember her when old Brown put a halter around my neck. I dunno as I like it. Looks sort of scary."

"Don't have such thoughts," exclaimed Cook, stroking his golden beard. "We've a holy mission. We're warriors in the cause of liberty, and we'll win a crown of glory! The old man says so, and he knows. How about you, Shields? You ain't backing out?"

"No, suh," spoke up the black man. "Not me."

Platt looked at them.

"You're all stark mad," he said quietly. "It's no way to go about things. You're inciting rebellion; your talk of setting up a republic is rank treason.

You'll be killed like rats before you can get out of Harper's Ferry."

The cool words reached into them. A shadow chilled the face of the young Iowan, of the fervent Cook. The black man, Shields, wagged his head at Platt.

"De ol' man will lead us out, suh. He am app'inted. We come to open de way from bondage. When it gits knowed, he'll git plenty help."

"Don't talk that sort of nonsense to me," Platt rejoined. "I'm no abolition fanatic; I'm a Southerner." He glanced around from face to face. "Who is the old fool downstairs who calls himself Smith?"

A sober-faced, strapping man made answer.

"The whole country will know mighty soon. He's John Brown of Free-soiler Kansas. The work he finished there, is going to be repeated here, until the South gives up her slave-soil doctrines."

"That man—the bushwhacking pirate they call Ossawatomie Brown?" Platt was startled. "Why, he's been outlawed! He can't rob and murder here; this isn't Kansas, on the edge of civilization. Every white man in the South will fight him."

"Keep to a civil tongue when you mention him," said the big man, and gave Platt one hard look. "I'm Watson Brown, his son. And you're dead wrong. When it's known we've come to end slavery, we'll be supported by all thinking citizens of Maryland, Virginia—the whole country!"

"You bet!" spoke up a booted fellow of careless dress, with one trouser leg out, the other tucked in. Kagi, they called him. "I got kin in the Shenandoah Valley, where I was raised. I know the folks down yonder. Why, Robert E. Lee is willing to free most of his slaves; he's done said so! We'll get a raft o' folks like that with us."

"Not when you act like a gang of pirates," snapped Platt. "What you'll get is the gallows."

Watson Brown glowered at him. "That rests with God. I've got two brothers here. We left one in Kansas, killed by you slave-soilers. If such an end is appointed to us, so let it be! The very stones will rise up in arms to avenge us, to fulfill our mission."

Remley Platt swallowed hard, compelled himself to silence lest he irritate these madmen to some frenzied action. The earnestness of these men was appalling. Arm the slaves—make war—a holy mission, a crown of glory? And they meant it. The damned fools meant every word of it!

The talk went on around him, talk of plans and discussions of purposes. Cross the Shenandoah and settle in the mountains; form a great Black Way down through Virginia and clear to the Gulf. Mountains and swamps for hide-outs. Two hundred "Beecher Bibles", Sharp rifles, and the same number of pistols, boxed and ready in this very house. Over a thousand pikes, for Negro recruits.

"Back in Iowa," spoke up the young fellow, "we ain't so set on taking the slaves by force. And I don't like seizing Gov'ment property, dummed if I do."

"We're here, ain't we?" Cook replied. "And we're following the old man to hell or Halifax, you bet! He's got the mission. He knows."

The excited voice of Newby came through the open trap at the head of the stairs.

"Cap'n says to get on yo' arms and come down, folks! We're goin', we're goin'!"

A stir, a bustle, springing figures. Platt followed them downstairs, watched but not hindered.

Below, he looked and listened with blank incredulity. Here was a phantasy really beyond sober belief. Twenty-two of them in all; seventeen whites, five colored. Heavy, short rifles, Sharp's carbines, and revolvers under coats and cloaks. The blacks handled their arms awkwardly.

Several of the men were signing

articles, putting their names to a constitution for a republic of whites and freed slaves. An army had been organized, evidently. Old Brown was commander in chief, the others were captains and lieutenants. And now, clapping a weathered canvas cap on his head, Brown made a speech. Fragments of it staggered Platt, with the queer combination of sanity and madness:

"Gentlemen. . . You all know how dear life is to you; lives of others are as dear to them . . . if necessary, in order to save your own . . . make sure work of it." In revolt and rebellion, attacking government forces, and yet shrinking from killing!

BROWN meant business. He issued orders, quietly assigning his men to the attack. The telegraph line, the Potomac bridge, the Shenandoah bridge, the armory and engine-house, the arsenal, the rifle factory up the Shenandoah, the town streets, the nearby plantations for hostages and blacks. He seemed to know every road, every building. He was spreading his men powerful thin, Platt reflected, but his precision held something deadly. What he did not know, was the temper of these people ahead, of Virginia.

"You'll ride with me on the wagon seat," and the masterful gray eyes lit on the staring Platt. "I have your promise. If you break it, you'll be shot. Come on!"

Outside, a one-horse wagon had been brought to the porch. Sledge and crowbar were tossed in, and a bundle of the iron-pointed pikes. Platt and old John Brown mounted to the seat. One of the men climbed into the box. Brown shook the lines and clucked to the horse. The men afoot paired off before and behind. Only eighteen now; three men remained here at the log house.

"Haven't you got more men than this, Brown?" demanded the amazed Platt.

"I've been hurried a little: I calculated on more. But when we've made a showing at the Ferry," the old man said confidently, "we'll soon have all we need."

"Blacks?"

"Slaves and freeman. They need only the word to join us."

"For God's sake, listen!" broke out Platt. "You're taking your men into a trap. No help can reach you, and you can't get out."

"You forget the hostages."

"A hell of a lot of good they'll do. They'd rather be blown sky-high with you than see you get away!"

Brown merely grunted at him to stop talking. Hunched and moody, he yet seemed perfectly assured; he drove as composedly as though heading home from church.

The clouded night was black, the rocky road scarcely visible. The horse stumbled. The wagon-box jingled with metal. The wheels clattered, the boots of the "army" scuffed and crunched in an irregular tramp. Not a soul was encountered during this march, which to Remley Platt seemed interminable.

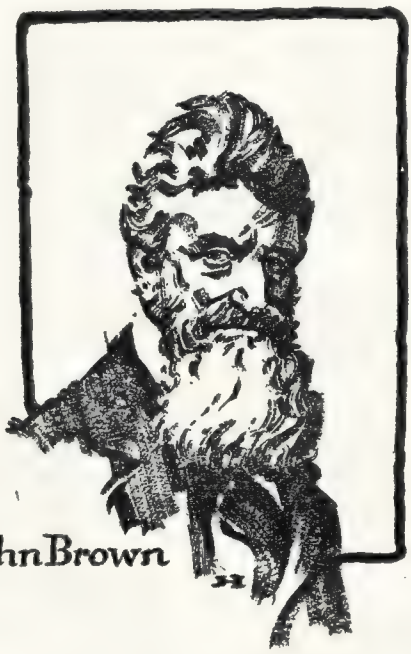
At last the road dipped. The Dunker chapel loomed yonder, all deserted. Then the schoolhouse in its holly beside the road; a couple of miles now to the Ferry. The river, the bordering canal, the cliff; there lay the Ferry, ahead and to the right, across the river.

Platt felt a creepy awe, a species of amazed superstition, grow on him. They came to one of the canal locks, with a light in the cabin window. George Hardy must be there, he knew, but did not look out with hail or query. In all that five miles nobody challenged these crazy Abolitionists marching into Virginia. Everything seemed made to order for old John Brown.

Here at last were the railroad tracks and the bridge. At the other end, on that low triangle between the Potomac on the north and the Shenandoah on the south, were the Government buildings, the depot and hotels, the houses

and street lights; and beyond were the fitful lights of houses that had climbed the background bluffs. Distant singing in chorus, voices at work on a Methodist hymn, sounded like a revival meeting.

Brown halted, here at the Maryland end of the bridge. Mutterings, swish of leather belts, faint clink of weapons, as the men closed up; word came that the telegraph line to Baltimore and Washington was torn down. The old toll box at this end of the bridge was vacant. Two of the men trudged ahead into the darkness of the covered bridge, three hundred yards long. Old Brown clucked to his horse, the wheels rattled over the planks, the boots of the marching men clumped behind.



Platt peered ahead eagerly. Outlined against the lighted Virginia bridge-end, the watchman was coming on a lantern-patrol of the tracks. Something hard bored into Platt's back; a revolver muzzle. A man was kneeling behind the wagon seat. Other men advanced on either side of the wagon. The watchman veered over and swung his lantern, and Platt recognized the friendly face of William Williams peering up.

"Evening, folks. Been to Dunker meeting in Maryland, I reckon?"

"We're going to a meeting, friend," said Brown. Williams held up his lantern.

"Hello! If it ain't Rem Platt—hey, what's this?"

Two men closed in from the shadows. They took him with hasty grip on arms and shoulders, their rifles showing.

"You're our prisoner. Take it easy and you'll not be harmed."

"Train robbers, are you? By God, now I know—you're from the Kennedy farm! Nigger runners—"

Brown's voice cut in. "We're here to hold the town and arsenal and free the slaves of Virginia."

"By what authority, damn you?" gasped the watchman.

"That of God Almighty, friend. I advise you to be quiet and go peaceably."

"Why, you black-hearted scoundrel!" The lantern trembled in Williams' hand. "I'll see you hanged! You too, Rem Platt. So this is how you come back from up North, huh. Helping nigger stealers raid your own folks!"

"Don't you call me out, Williams!" burst forth Platt. "I'm not—"

"We're wasting time," Brown intervened. "March that man ahead; if he resists, shoot him. But don't kill him if you can help it."

Williams, growling in his beard, was prodded on through the bridge. The wagon followed. Platt sat aghast over the accusation, realizing how his presence here must look; for the first time, he began to worry over his own plight. Williams was a stubborn man, and would have to be set right about this.

OUT of the bridge now; tramp, tramp, rattle and clink! The Galt House on the left and the old arsenal building on the right: railroad offices and shops.

Up Potomac Street were the armory and fire-engine house in a large fenced yard.

Brown led his procession straight ahead. A light shone upon the pillared gateway, showing the stout iron gate closed. Dan Wheeler, the armory yard watchman, gawked through the iron rods at the guns and men. Hands reached through and grabbed him, men were climbing the pillars. Voices resounded.

"Open that wagon gate!"

"How can I if I'm stuck here?" protested Wheeler.

"Hand over the key!"

"Can't do it, you dummed fools!"

"Don't wait for the key," ordered old Brown. "Fetch the crowbar from the wagon and break that chain."

The padlocked chain of the double gate was twisted apart, and the gates swung wide. Men ran through, and Brown drove through.

"What'll we do with the two watchmen, Cap'n?"

"Lock 'em in the guardhouse till we're established. This man with 'em."

Platt was hustled off as the men scattered, and shoved into the watch room on the heels of Williams and Dan Wheeler. Smoldering coal in the fireplace gave a little light to the room. Wheeler broke out with questions.

"Damned Abolitionists come to free the slaves."

"Why, they're crazy! This is government property!"

"Crazy or not, they're slick," growled Williams. "And here's one treacherous hound who'll sweat for this work. Yes, I mean you, Platt!"

"Hello! If it ain't Rem Platt!" Wheeler exclaimed in recognition. "Heard you'd gone up North. Did they nab you, Rem?"

"Hold on! Don't shake hands with the skunk!" snarled Williams. "Didn't you see him on that wagon seat, riding free and easy?"

"Not me. All I saw was them guns."

"He brought 'em into the bridge. I'd been suspicious only I seen him. A decoy, to hold me in talk—"

"Don't be a fool," broke in Platt angrily. "I had a pistol in my back. They caught me at the Kennedy place and fetched me along. Promised they'd turn me loose."

"I don't swaller that," said Williams. "You've come back from the North with those infernal Abolition notions. You led the way down here with that old devil. You're used to these parts, you know there was only one bridge watch Sunday night. And I reckon you'd learned of that Methodist meeting where all the folks are. Well, you won't last long when the Ferry people know what I know."

Despite explanations, Platt found himself locked in with two men who were all too prone to suspect and accuse him.

Startled cries came from the streets of the town. Murmurs and scuffling feet sounded from the armory yard. Prisoners were being brought in and stowed in the armory. A shot, the first one, rang through the night. Then old Brown came into the watch room.

"As soon as I'm secure, you'll be sent home to reassure your families that I'm harming no prisoners, you watchmen. This man Platt can go with you; he knows my plans. I'll have fifteen hundred men here by noon."

"Yes, I reckon he knows your plans, all right," Williams growled.

"You can come into the engine room, if you like. I'm leaving the door open, for warmth."

Platt thankfully went into the engine room to escape the wrathful watchmen. The two fire-engines in dimly seen red gilt, high wheels and platforms, ladders and slung leather buckets, made the room smell of rubber and leather. Men were all around, old Brown was everywhere, getting reports and handing out orders.

Twenty or more prisoners in the

armory, Platt heard. Some blacks had joined and were being armed with the six-foot pikes. Wild rumors flew around. Platt wearily seated himself on the running-board of one of the engines, and settled down to wait. The whole thing was a nightmare, unreal and fantastic and impossible.

Worse yet when the eastbound B. & O. passenger train pulled in. Another rifle shot from the direction of the bridge; presently a spattering of shots, a bedlam of excited shouts. The train was being held, the frightened passengers were dispersing into the depot hotel for the night. Then things quieted down.

Into the engine room where Platt remained, crept a number of shivering Negroes, armed with pikes, chattering excitedly. "We's free! De word am come! Gwine be sojers in the army o' freedom, glory be!"

The lantern here began to flicker out, the room was chill and dark, and Platt went back into the watch room for warmth. Old Brown was warming himself before the fire; the two watchmen had gone.

"I sent them home under guard," said Brown, guessing what was in Platt's mind, "to show themselves unharmed. I intend to do that from time to time, with hostages. There seems to be a lot of uneasiness in the town. If you wish to go, I'll see that you're passed."

"No thanks," said Platt grimly. "Those watchmen think I'm one of your gang and vow they'll get me hanged. I'll wait till they cool off. There'll be hanging enough without me decorating a rope."

John Brown nodded, with a kindly smile. "I'll certify you didn't come of your own will. You're safer here just now; when you go out with other hostages, the folks will understand. Make yourself comfortable."

Platt did so. He was curious, now, as he gazed at the gaunt, powerful figure. He was not so sure this old man was crazy. It was all a madly insane thing, yes, but those steady gray eyes held no insanity.

It drew on into early morning, old Brown busily at work. By the voices from the engine room, several prisoners had been stowed there in the dark; Platt remained where he was, glad of the warmth and light. Those armed blacks might do anything on slight excuse; they were like nervous children.

From outside came an abrupt, loud challenge. "All's well?" The gates clanked open; rumble of wheels and scrape of hooves betokened a heavy wagon driven in. Old Brown tramped into the watch room, rubbing his chilled hands.

"Now we have what insures success!" he muttered.

Feet pounded the floor, the door opened, and three men came in. A mulatto, the blond enthusiast Cook, and a prisoner. Platt stared in rank disbelief.

"Got him, Cap," said Cook. "Here he is. Osborne has the sword. Got the other man too, the planter Allstadt, on our way back. He's over in the armory."

John Brown took the handsome sheathed sword the mulatto handed him, and looked at the prisoner.

"You're Colonel Washington, I believe. I had you brought in here to the fire."

Platt swallowed hard. Colonel Lewis Washington of Bellair Plantation, four miles out on the Charlestown road, great grandson of George Washington's brother, a Virginian of Virginians! The portly, florid prisoner burst out furiously.

"You command this crowd of ruffians? What's the meaning of this outrage—entering my home, frightening the ladies, summoning me out of bed, seizing my Negroes and other property—what are you doing here in the Government works? You intend to sack Harper's Ferry?"

"No, not at all, Colonel Washington," answered Brown. "We've come to free

the slaves. We hold the arsenal simply for that purpose. We'll withdraw in due time."

"Black Abolitionists, eh? By what authority do you invade the Commonwealth of Virginia and interfere with the property right of her citizens?" stormed Washington.

"By the authority of the Almighty, sir," said Brown mildly. "We admit no rights in human flesh and blood."

"By heaven, you're crazy! What are you doing with that sword? Do you know that it's the sword Frederick the Great presented to George Washington?"

Brown, buckling on the weapon, smiled.

"I know it very well. I was particularly anxious to have it, as an inspiration to my men. The sword of Washington is fittingly worn in the cause of human liberty. We're not robbers, sir; we are liberators. I have taken you as a hostage because you're an aide on the Governor's staff—"

"Bah! You'll get no protection from me or because of me!"

"When we've withdrawn unmolested, you shall all return to your homes," said Brown, and strode out alertly at sound of loud voices at the gate.

COOK and the mulatto, Osborne, stood at one side of the fireplace, warming their hands. Under Washington's inquiring gaze, Platt nodded and spoke.

"I think you know me, sir—Remly Platt, of Jefferson County."

"You're not one of these infernal fanatics?"

"No, sir. They brought me in from Maryland, so I wouldn't spread the alarm ahead of them. I'm free to go, but dare not. The watchmen who were taken and freed, supposed me to be one of the band. I'm not, however."

"True enough," spoke up the blond Cook, amiably. "He's not one of us. He had to choose between staying at the farm, tied up, or coming along peaceably."

"No son of Henry Platt would be in so treasonable an affair," Washington said, with a nod. "You did well to remain here. I'll vouch for you personnally when this business is settled."

The train was pulling out now, quickening pace, leaving a wake of defiant toots from the whistle, of wrathful cheers from the passengers. Old Brown came in, breathless but calm as ever. Cook flung a question at him.

"Was that the train, Cap'n?"

"Yes. I was asked to walk ahead into the bridge with the conductor, to show that no damage had been done. I trust the passengers were caused no inconvenience."

Washington stared at him. "You must be insane! You've signed your own death warrant. When those people get to Baltimore and Washington—"

"We'll have withdrawn into the mountains," struck in Brown calmly. "The telegraph line is destroyed, and Harper's Ferry is under my thumb."

"The whole country will be in a blaze inside of another hour!"

"Then I'll fight fire with fire. You've heard of 'bleeding Kansas', no doubt? I'll make a bloody spot here, if forced to it," Brown said sternly. "If you wish to talk with your friends in the engine room, you're free to do so."

He turned with quick orders. "Cook! Take Tidd, Leeman and half a dozen Negroes, with Colonel Washington's wagon and team. Go back to the farm, load in the arms there, and fetch them down to the schoolhouse, where we can get them quickly. Pick up the planter Byrnes on the way, with his Negroes. Osborne, take your post in the armory."

All three went out. Washington, alone with Platt, frowned at the latter.

"Arms, did he say?"

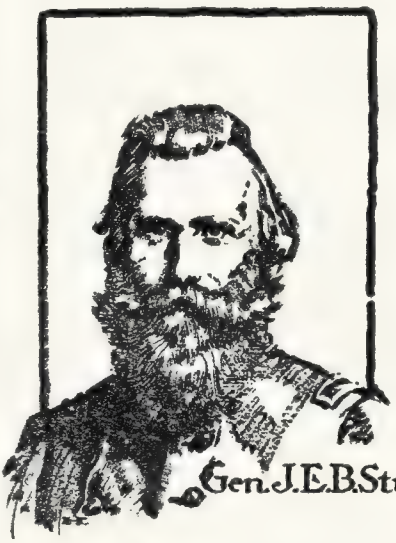
"They claim to have two hundred carbines and revolvers stored at the Kennedy farm. And a thousand pikes."

"Great God! To arm the blacks,

slaves and all? Infamous!" exploded Washington. "The man's a maniac! He mentioned Kansas—he can't be that outlaw Brown, by any chance?"

"Right," said Platt. "Ossawatomie Brown, and two of his sons, by the talk."

"Worse than I thought, then. I talked with those fellows who brought me in. A mission to perform, and so forth. Authority of the Almighty, eh? We're dealing with a desperate, deluded, fanatical lot of men, who'll stop at nothing. Come along and help me keep the prisoners cooled off. We must avoid trouble."



Platt followed into the engine room, now lighted by the dawn. One or two white guards, Negroes armed with pikes, and a huddled, shivering group of prisoners who were not at all in need of cooling off. They grouped about Washington with a babble of wild rumors and reports.

The dawn had come, gray, dulled by a chilling drizzle of rain. Another prisoner was marched in—Captain Daingerfield, chief clerk of the armory. He was fuming and storming about treason, armed rebellion and whatnot. Brown had come in, and through the door inched the staring Iowa boy.

"What's that talk, Cap'n?" he bleated. "This ain't treason against the country?"

"We shall be charged with it, be sure of that," old John Brown said with level voice. "Perhaps with worse, lad."

"Huh! I don't like it. I didn't know it was treason to free the slaves," and the Iowan went stumbling out again at Brown's order to guard the gate.

The day was up, the alarm was out, the town was astir. The bell of the Lutheran church was clanging like mad. Platt, standing at one of the vaulted windows, saw crowds of people pelting for the higher ground of the bluff, carrying their belongings. And now the shooting began. The second story windows of a building across the wide street jetted smoke spurts. An oath came from Washington.

"That black rascal has my own shotgun!"

A grizzled old slave, very erect, marched with the double-barreled gun on his shoulder. A citizen with a rifle was running from corner to corner; old Brown snapped an order to arrest him. The Negro sprang out to obey. The citizen swung around with his rifle up, the Negro let go both barrels, the man fell sprawling. The prisoners in the yard were shouting and gesturing, then bolted for cover. The firing from the town increased each moment.

One of the prisoners from the yard came panting into the engine room. He was the master machinist, who had been let out under guard to breakfast with his family.

"That old devil at the head of this," he panted to Daingerfield and Washington, "said we'd all be safe if he wasn't molested. The militia are coming from Charlestown, but won't be here for several hours."

"What are the citizens doing?" demanded Washington.

"Nothing. Guns are mighty scarce. They allowed the town's at the mercy

of these desperadoes. A thousand or more, I heard tell."

"Nonsense. Not over a score in all, according to Platt, here."

"Don't matter. They're arming the blacks—they hold both bridges, the rifle works, the main streets, and all of us hostages."

The talk ran on and on. A drizzling rain had set in. Old Brown, girded with the Washington sword, was bustling about furiously; but now the fire from those second story windows began to tell. The street was cleared. The old Negro lay there dead. Into the armory yard staggered the strapping Watson Brown, and collapsed in the engine room with a rush of blood on his lips. Old Brown darted in, bent over him.

"Badly hurt, Watson?"

"Never mind me. Go on with the work."

John Brown darted out again, while somebody looked after his wounded son. Another hostage was brought in, and the group gathered around him for news.

"They've killed Cap'n Turner and Boerly, the grocer. But our men are getting together now; we'll get every one of the scoundrels!"

So it looked, indeed. To Platt's eye, old Brown had lost his composure and was looking worried and flustered. He did not even have his whole "army" here. A part of his men were over in Maryland at the Kennedy farm; others were up the Shenandoah, at the rifle factory. None of his messengers had returned, and the arms had not come.

Slaves had rallied to him, yes; he had more slaves now than whites, and some forty hostages to guard. The time dragged past and nothing seemed to happen. The shooting went on in ever increasing volume, however. It grew more and more obvious that the citizens, instead of being cowed by this raid, had reacted to it like hornets.

Watson Brown had been lifted into the watch room here, for warmth, as he coughed blood. Two men were talking near him, as Platt joined them.

"The old fool had just one chance and missed it," one said. "If he'd burned a few houses, shot a few people, he might have terrorized the place."

"We meant to harm nobody," said Watson Brown faintly. "We only came to free the slaves. We didn't go to shoot folks."

He would say no more, despite the questions that rained on him. Washington, conferring with the other hostages, arranged a settled resistance to any demands John Brown might make. No appeals to the people.

EXCITEMENT was sweeping the town now, cheers were ringing high. The Charlestown Guards were coming. Troops were here at last. Outside, John Brown was in argument with one of his own men, steadfastly refusing all pleas to retreat while he might. He had not heard from his couriers, from his scattered men, from his stock of rifles.

Platt and others clambered on the fire engines; from this position, the view through the high vaulted windows opened up. The Charlestown militia had come, people were running down the bluffs, cheers were storming up. But the firing thickened. Old John Brown had mustered his whites and blacks out there in Potomac Street. Troops had crossed to attack by way of the bridge—now for it!

The bridge-head was only a few rods distant. Brown led his men at it. The street clangored with the heavy burst of shotguns. Another burst, quick and rattling; then a firing at will. The troops, surprised at the Virginia end of the bridge, were driven back into cover.

Brown led his men back to the armory yard, with glittering sword and old canvas cap. A shot from a street corner, then others. Newby, the mulatto, went down. Little Shields fired back, raised shrill and angry yells. Platt saw them

all scurry back into shelter of the yard again, listened to the talk around him, watched every speck of movement in the town. Ears could tell more than eyes now, for the gray morning had crept by and noon was come and gone.

By the cheers, more troops were beating in—militia companies from the whole countryside. From the railroad cut across in Maryland wailed a locomotive whistle; Maryland militia gathering. And old John Brown was doing nothing.

He came into the engine house, stooped over his dying son, and straightened up as Washington and Daingerfield argued with him. He seemed dazed, bewildered. In the midst came a panting runner, a messenger from the man Kagi, who held the rifle factory. Kagi was hard put to it, advised instant retreat out of town. John Brown shook his head.

"Tell Kagi to hold on for a few minutes. As soon as the Maryland party is in, we'll evacuate. We'll get terms and march out."

The messenger darted away, Platt doubted if he would ever get back to the rifle works; things were closing in. He could see Brown, outside now, oblivious of bullets; the old man seemed to have a charmed life. Even to Platt's eyes, the game was clearly up. Troops were surrounding the arsenal building, outside the yard. The Galt House by the bridge had been occupied. More buildings, overlooking the yard, were being filled with sharpshooters. Companies of militia and citizens were in the streets.

Brown went to the armory building, and returned with a number of hostages and all his guards. Platt's eyes bulged with realization. Six of them besides himself. There were the Iowa lad, little black Shields, the blond Cook, another of Brown's sons, two other white men, and old John Brown. No more, except the half dozen blacks already here in the engine house. Old Brown had waited too long. In one way and another, he had been cut down to this sorry force. And those outside knew it.

As Brown and his men came into the engine house, the deep roar of the mob began to rise. Bullets plunked into the door as it was closed and barricaded. Calmly, Brown directed the work, got the windows closed with planks torn from the floor, and set the blacks to making loopholes through the brick walls.

Eight hostages here. One of them went to Brown, pleaded with him. Platt heard the calm voice make reply.

"You're men of influence; that's why I choose you. Your friends will be given to understand that you'll share the treatment given me and my men—"

Those outside were not waiting to understand anything. Bullets were smacking into the bricks, splintering the glass and planks at the windows, rapping on the doors. The crowd was in the very yard outside. The armory buildings had feen forced, the prisoners there released, arms were being passed around.

"The people are out of hand," cried one planter, in panic. "Draw up your terms, Brown! We'll deliver them under a flag of truce."

John Brown, hacking at a loophole, spoke over his shoulder.

"You write, I'll sign. My son was barbarously shot while taking out a message under a white flag. I'll march men and you hostages to the other end of the Potomac bridge. There you'll be released. We'll take care of ourselves."

The note was scribbled and signed. The din outside was rising, strident and savage. Eyes circled faces—who would face it? Washington, Major Mills, Allstadt—then Platt heard his own voice, thin and strained.

"Give it here. You gentlemen have families. I haven't."

Next he knew, he was out in the drizzle, waving the handkerchief tied to a plank splinter. A blast of jeers, a gust of balls whistling around him, fanning him with hornet wings. He dived back

across the threshold and the door was slammed.

Two others, well known men, tried the trick and failed, were sent darting back in. One, at least, entered. The other was riddled with balls.

"No terms, they're howling!" panted the man. "They're a mob, gone mad. They're crazy! They're all crazy!"

True enough, thought Platt. They all were crazy, inside and out.

"We've done our best to avoid bloodshed," old John Brown was saying calmly. "We won't be taken; we're ready to die. I've no desire to have you harmed, gentlemen; make yourselves as safe as possible."

"Why, they'll kill all of us, rather than give you terms!" burst out Daingerfield. A tremendous and sustained burst of gunfire drowned his voice.

Brown and his men were firing now.

The whole place had been a target. The windows were shattered, the doors were rifted with jagged holes, the bricks of the loopholes were scored by humming lead. Watson Brown, dying, crawled in from the watch room with his carbine; he lay on the floor, coughing. The haggard John Brown touched his hand from time to time. The other son was dead. Another man, one Thompson, lay dead.

The rooms were dense with powder fumes. Outside was a pandemonium, inside was an inferno. The young Iowan, white to the lips, was firing desperately, frantically. Shields crouched at his loophole, sweating as he shot. The blacks armed with pikes had crawled under the fire engines.

Old Brown was everywhere, always back to the dying Watson, fearless, unhurried. He and Washington were the only cool men in the place, thought Platt; he himself was riddled with panic, as he huddled with the other hostages.

"Keep low, against the walls," lifted Washington's voice. "Some of you go into the watch room; it may be the safest place."

There was a charge outside, with scorching volleys, blasts of yells and shouts. The charge never reached the house. Platt began to laugh. All this to take four living men, two dead men, and one the same as dead! A thousand, fifteen hundred men, in a frenzy out there. Insurrection, arming of slaves, rebellion —all had dwindled down to this: three whites and one black, fighting the world. They all were crazy.

YET they fought. The afternoon was dragging on. The dusk of the miserable day fell early, and the firing gradually died out, the yells dwindled into spasmodic outbursts. Platt heard old John Brown talking, wearily, in the gathering darkness to Washington.

"I've now lost three sons in the cause of liberty," he was saying.

A locomotive whistle cut short his words. The train rumbled across the bridge and fresh cheers broke out. Measured tramp of marching men, clank of iron tires in the street, commands; the tramping came closer in the obscurity. On the battered double doors of the engine house came a loud, determined rap. Brown went close.

"Who is it?" he demanded, calm as ever.

"Lieutenant J. E. B. Stuart of the United States Army, aide to Colonel Robert E. Lee. We're here with ninety marines and two cannons from the Washington navy yard, by orders of the President. I have a mesage from Colonel Lee to the insurgent commander."

"You may come in," replied Brown, and began to unfasten the doors. "Will somebody strike a light? A lantern will serve."

The lantern was passed forward. On the threshold appeared Stuart, in cavalry cloak and smart high cap. He blinked and stared and broke out sharply.

"What's this? Why, you're old Ossa-

watomie Brown of Kansas, who was once my prisoner!"

"Yes, but you didn't keep me," said Brown. "You come with a message. I believe. What is it? Please be brief."

"Colonel Lee demands in the name of the United States that you surrender yourself and force to the clemency of the Government."

"I refuse," the old man said calmly. "I know very well what to expect there; the rope for all of us. We either march out unmolested or die right here."

Platt stared, unbelieving, uncomprehending. But it was true. He heard Stuart say something about having the night to reconsider, about returning at seven in the morning. Then the doors were closed. By the flicker of the draft-blown lantern, old John Brown was strengthening the defenses again. One of the engines was rolled forward against the doors.

In here, darkness again, faint stirs shifted postures, the harsh breathing of Watson Brown, who was dying hard. Platt, hungry and cold, dozed by snatches, wakened to voices, dozed again. He remembered drifts of talk, Washington arguing anew with the old fanatic. He caught one lingering phrase from Brown's lips:

"I'm conscious of no wrong committed by us—"

Crazy—they all were crazy! A night of horror and of death. Yet, as Platt now and again wakened, listened, sought for sleep afresh, a queer uncertainty crept into his brain. There in the darkness was a force, a presence. He could almost see that haggard face with the resolute gray eyes.

Crazy? Perhaps the old man was the only one, after all, not crazy. Platt felt a desire to laugh at the thought, but somehow it remained, startling him. Through his half-slumber pierced a voice, the calm voice of the old man.

"What I have done, is well done, and I know what to expect. I have not failed."

Sheer nonsense, he thought, and went off to sleep again.

The gray dawn, and a cold hand, roused him. The hand was touching his wrist, his arm, his cheek. He uttered a choked cry, started in violent protest. Suddenly he wakened to the engine room, the ghostly dead and living, the wan thin face of the young man from Iowa close and spectral in the dimness, speaking to him.

"You take it. Keep it for me or—or send it back home."

Platt was wide awake now. There was an object thrust into his hand; the young Iowan was scuttling away. Platt shoved it into a pocket. He was still in this horror-ridden engine house, and nothing else mattered.

The day brightened. Like the others, Platt moved about, eased his cramped and chill limbs. There was old Brown; he seemed to have grown grayer from his night's watch. He was sitting facing the barricaded doors, carbine under his hands, and the head of his son in his lap. To Platt's amazement, Watson Brown was still alive. He had thought the strapping fellow dead long since. But death was in his face now.

The Iowan man, the other white, little black Shields, were at loopholes, spare weapons laid ready beside them. The slave recruits were huddling together in a corner.

The town had roused. Shots and shouts, a gathering clamor, betokened another crazy day, but a short one. Old Brown was speaking.

"You gentlemen can bear witness I wish you no harm. The fault lies with those people outside—"

"Two men with a white flag, Cap'n!" "Young Iowa's voice was thin, hopeful, excited. "The marines are forming up."

Brown went to the doors, waiting. Footsteps outside, and a fist thumped.

"Lieutenant Stuart, from Colonel Lee. Are you ready to surrender?"

"No." Calm, steady, was the old man's voice. "I prefer to die right here."

Silence, dread silence; Platt found himself choking with the suspense of it. Guns smashed out. A tramping thud of feet coming forward at the charge. Carbines cracked to right and left; thunderous blows beat upon the doors, but they shook and held.

To Platt, stricken cold by panic and fear, there was a constantly mounting tempo of sharp sounds.

Crash, and crash again, as the doors shook to some kind of a ram. Brown was firing into them. The slaves cringed and jibbered. The barricading planks broke inward, the doors were giving. One of them was battered ajar, still held by a looped rope. The end of a ladder came through the gap. Bayonets, a sword, hacked at the rope.

Daingerfield darted forward, caught at the rope, and tore it free. He sprang aside. The gap widened as the door swung in upon loosened hinges, and the fire engine rolled back. Rifle smoke spurted through the gap.

A low, stifled cry as a bullet smacked home. An officer with his sword came plunging through the gap; behind him were blue coats, red trappings, bayonets and smoking muzzles. The officer leaped on the engine, peered around, leaped down, and his sword lunged.

Old Brown was down now, doubled forward on his knees. The sword hilt rose and fell. The marines were pouring in, bayonets darted right and left; everything was a mad chaotic confusion. Daingerfield dodged a bayonet. Platt yelled madly with a seared arm, as a marine stabbed at him. Then Colonel Washington was climbing on an engine and fronting the bayonets.

"It's all over! We're the prisoners, you fools!"

The officers gained command of their frenzied men, and the turmoil died.

REMLEY PLATT never remembered how he got there, but he was out on the lawn in the bright Virginia sunshine, with the others. Cheers and sobbing women, a mob surging beyond, marines clearing a space.

He saw the young Iowan, pale but erect, staring of eye; little black Shields, ashen now, mouth open and eyes rolling. Just the two of them, unhurt, hustled out. Old John Brown was carried forth and laid down. A rabble of furious yells arose, but the marines had formed a hollow square. Then the bodies.

Platt lingered, unrecognized, forgotten, unshaven, haggard. He heard them questioning the old hurt men, he heard the faint answers; the prisoners were led away, the turmoil passed.

A hard object in his pocket was denting his flesh, and he drew it out. Then he remembered the cold hand in the dawn, the wan face of young Iowa. He took the thing out and stared. A little case; the lid opened to his hand. A picture—an ambrotype, with the glass gone. A girl's face. A hasty scrawl on the inside paper of the cover, a name and address, a note:

"Elza (or was it Elsie?): Farewell, farewell. Edwin."

Platt thrust it away. He heard his name called, and turned. Colonel Washington had come to him, holding the recovered sword.

"You'd better go with the wagon to Bellair, Platt; I shall be glad to have you. I'm waiting for Governor Wise, who's on the way. I don't think there'll be any more trouble. We're getting back to sanity. What a night! They all were crazy—"

They all were crazy?

Platt stumbled away toward the wagon. The words dinned at him. Other words wakened in his brain and drowned them out. He could not be sure of them, but there they were, whether fact or fancy—

"I have not failed."

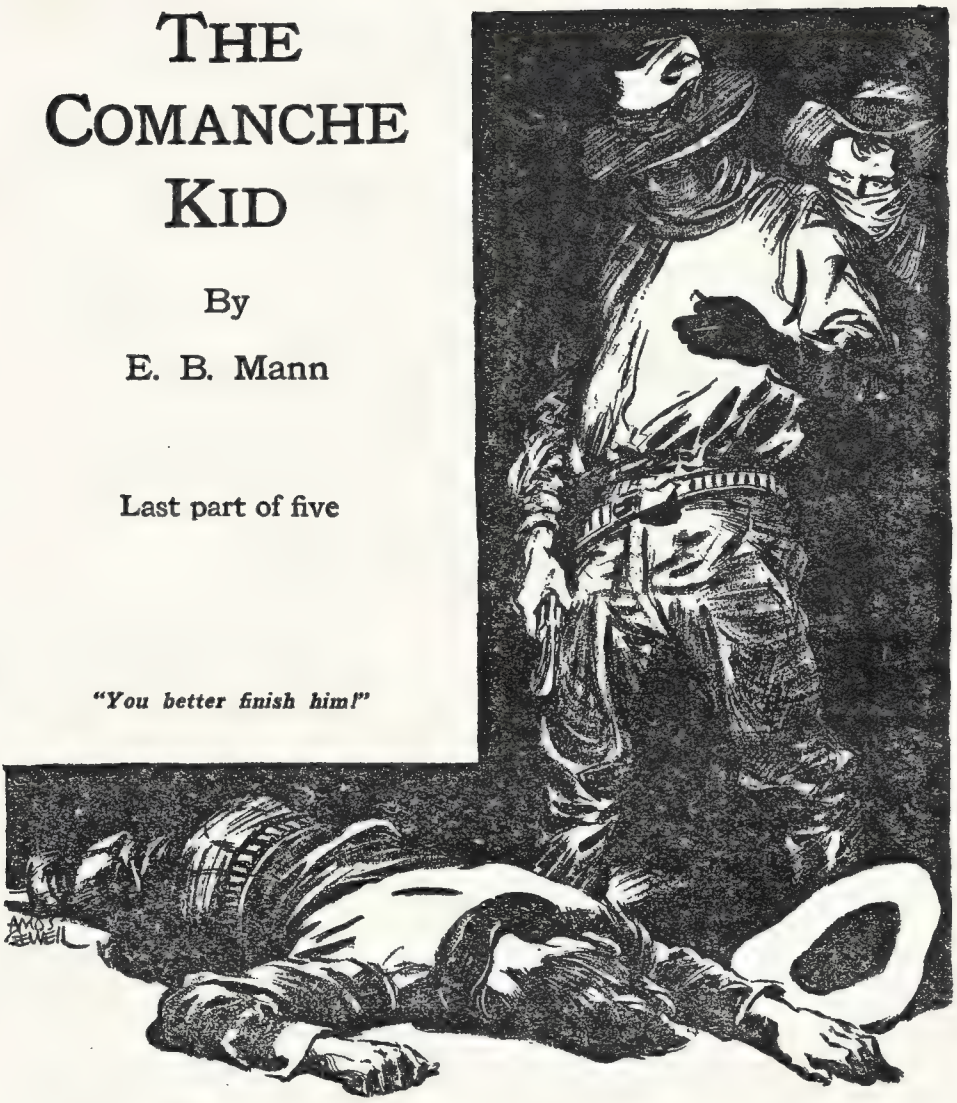
(See Camp-fire note)

THE COMANCHE KID

By

E. B. Mann

Last part of five



"You better finish him!"

(Begin here)

TIGHT-LIPPED, cloaked in mystery, Dallas Spain came riding into the Shogun country, trailing the masked desperado who wore his father's guns.

Spain was a name with trigger-tense qualities in the Southwest. Angel Spain, the father of Dallas, had killed his share of men, both before and after he became a peace officer. At the present time his name was clouded by a tragedy that had shocked three states.

Two bodies had been found in an arroyo five miles from Angel's ranch. They were burned beyond recognition, but had been identified as the remains of two men who had been closing a deal with Angel for his land holdings. And now Angel Spain was missing with the money they were known to have been carrying—and a hooded bandit, who carried Angel's guns, was riding the owl-hoot trail.

Shortly after Dallas Spain had arrived in Comanche, the hooded man shot Manning Doran, a rancher. And this

time definite, although contradictory clues began to take shape.

Dallas Spain accused Zimmerman, a rancher, of being in reality Jorgensen, who was supposed to have been murdered by Spain's father. The inference was plain. If Zimmerman *were* Jorgensen, then Angel Spain's charred body had been one of the two discovered at the ranch, and another masquerading as the dead man was the hooded night rider.

Zimmerman, however, seemed to have an air-tight alibi, and shortly something happened which seemed to put him definitely in the clear. For in a Comanche saloon, with Zimmerman in plain sight of a score of witnesses, a shot from the dark wounded Mac, the proprietor (and the narrator of the story). The gunman escaped, but not before he was seen through the window—and identified as wearing a black hood!

Meanwhile the ill-concealed enmity between Zimmerman and Dallas Spain was breaking out into deadly feud, aggravated by the skill each of them had shown at gun-fighting and with bare fists.

Sooner or later that feud was to be settled. It would be with lead or fists, but it would be settled for all time.

And on a day scarcely a month after Spain first arrived, a quick succession of events piled drama upon near tragedy, and made the showdown all the more inevitable. Angel fell in love with Paula Doran, who had been hand-picked for Zimmerman's future wife. She announced her engagement to Zimmerman—and intimated that she was doing it because of some hidden debt. Zimmerman and Spain were matched for a grudge fight—with half the money in town bet on the outcome. And last but not least—the hooded man remained unknown and uncaptured, with two men's names under a cloud while he still lived!

Ironically, the first definite clue which came to Dallas Spain came on the eve of the big fight. Dallas received a note, ostensibly signed by Paula, asking him to meet her on the outskirt of town.

Rendezvous it was not; it had the stamp of ambush and secret murder on it, Dallas thought. And there were his friends, who had wagered heavily on him, to consider. Should he not appear for the fight, their money would be forfeited.

But there was a greater incentive than even this. Here, at the end of a hopelessly blind trail, was the first chance of direct contact with men who wished him evil. It was more than possible that they were behind his father's disappearance and disgrace.

Saying nothing about his plans, Dallas Spain rode away to dare certain ambush to gain his goal. As late as an hour before the fight it looked as though he had gambled too recklessly. For he was still missing, without word, and tempers in Comanche were at the breaking point.

But an hour before the deadline, he rode back into town, with the hint of untold secrets in his eyes and an assurance that seemed to promise that the end of truce was here.

But before avenging his father, he had his debt to pay to his friends—and enemies. In the ring, with gloves—against the deadliest fighter in the Lone Star State!

CHAPTER XIX

PAY-OFF PUNCH

ONE step. That's all Zimmerman needed. He took it fast, surging in suddenly, hurling all his weight behind two smashing blows.

Speed. I'd seen Spain in action before; I knew he was fast. Yet what I saw now startled me.

Somewhere in that split second while Zimmerman's charge was in the making, Spain shifted his feet an inch or two and bent his knees. He dropped and let those killing fists go over him, then

drove forward with all the power of those bent horseman's legs of his behind the spearhead of a fist that slashed upward under Brick's arched ribs.

I heard Brick's hoarse explosive grunt. He came backward without moving his feet, hinged over Spain's fist. He hit the floor sitting and the ring shook with the impact. The force of the fall carried him back onto his shoulders. He twisted onto his side and lay there, still doubled up. He wasn't unconscious. He was facing me, and his eyes were open, and the deadly hatred in them reminded me of snakes. But he was paralyzed.

Lefty has told me, since then, about solar plexus knockouts. There's a nerve somewhere up under the front junction of a man's ribs that seems to control his motor reflexes. You've had the wind knocked out of you? Well, a solar plexus knockout is that—plus. You've got all your faculties except movement. You can see, and hear, and feel—but you can't move. And you can't breathe.

That's what Spain's punch had done to Zimmerman. Tom Olliphant was bending over Brick now, swinging his right arm up and down. The first count I heard was "four." Spain was back against the ropes, his elbows hooked back over them, sucking in hungry breaths as he watched Olliphant's arm.

"Five . . . six. . ."

Brick was moving now, but he was still hurt. You could hear him breathing; great rasping groans.

"Seven. . ."

Brick got his knees under him and straightened his arms. He looked like a bear now, swaying there on his hands and knees with his head down between his arms.

"Eight . . . nine. . ."

Brick lurched up heavily. He was on his feet, but he didn't straighten. He bent far forward, his elbows guarding his body, his gloves and forearms hiding his face, and waited. He wasn't a fighting man any more, but he was game.

Spain went into him, but he couldn't find a hole in Brick's armor. I saw him draw back and shoot a look over at his corner. Lefty was making crazy gestures and his mouth was working. I couldn't hear a word he was saying. His lips weren't a foot away from my ear, but that crowd behind us and around us had let loose again and it was like being in the middle of a long unending thunder-clap.

Spain must have understood him, though, because he started stepping lightly around Zimmerman, pecking at him, goading him, trying to sting him into opening up. Lefty told me afterward that the only thing he was afraid of then was that Spain would be so eager to drop Brick again that he'd forget his coaching and go in there and smash his hands on Zimmerman's bent head and hard forearms.

Zimmerman stayed inside his bony shell until the bell saved him. He was still walking on his heels and teetering a little as he walked back to his corner.

Spain came in grinning, not breathing much harder now than he had been after the first round. But there was a spot on his chin that would be a fiery bruise tomorrow and his lower lip was cut on the inside, where Zimmerman's fist had driven it back against his teeth.

Lefty caught Spain in his arms and eased him down on the stool and crooned over him. "Boy, that was sweet! You see that, Mac? Was that a punch! Tip your head back, son; lemme rub the soreness out o' them neck muscles. How's the legs? Still good? Okay, Now listen—"

"Zimmerman can take it, too," I said. "He's tough. If Spain could just have got him while he was groggy—"

But I doubt if Lefty even heard me. He was too busy working on Spain to notice anything short of an earthquake.

Somebody tugged at my sleeve then and I looked around and there was Paula. Her face was white and her eyes

were as big as silver dollars. She was breathing short and choppily, as if she'd been running.

I bent down over her and I said, "You're in the wrong pew, ain't you? That's Zimmerman's corner yonder."

I don't think Paula heard me.

She said, "Is he—?" and stopped.

"The kid's all right," I said. "It's Zimmerman that's hurt."

I WOULD have told her a few things, but there wasn't time. The bell rang then and I looked up just in time to see Spain flash out of his corner and shoot that left and right at Zimmerman again.

This fourth round began exactly like the first one, with Spain meeting Zimmerman before Brick could get out of his corner. Spain's left started Zimmerman's mouth to bleeding again, and his right opened a fresh cut over Brick's left eye.

Those shots hurt Zimmerman, but they didn't stop him. He charged, just as he'd done in the first round, and I was amazed to see how strong he was. Not much more than a minute ago Brick had been a hurt and almost beaten man. Now, the swinging blows with which he drove Spain back across the ring seemed to have just as much power behind them as they'd ever had.

Spain pulled the same old trick, leading Zimmerman to the ropes and then stepping aside to let Brick hit the barrier. It worked, but I was watching Spain's face then and I don't think that that success pleased him. He got a long left home as Brick turned, and then Brick swept him back across the ring again.

This time Brick remembered what he'd learned in those first two rounds. He stopped just short of the ropes and wheeled and swung a flailing right at Spain. Spain ducked—and grinned.

I realized now that Lefty, close beside me, had hardly moved since this round began. He moved now, and I heard his shrill voice cutting through the roar. "Okay! He's ripe! You've got him now!"

Spain was already in retreat again, going backward fast, doing nothing but protect himself, and Lefty's words made little sense to me. They came to the ropes directly above me. I saw Brick stop his charge, cocking his fists for that hard sidelong lunge with which he'd tried before to catch Spain as Spain sidestepped. Only this time, Spain didn't sidestep.

He flung himself back as Brick halted and I thought for a moment he was coming through the ropes. He hit them hard, hurling his whole weight into them in a backward leap that took his feet clear off the floor. There's a good deal of elasticity in a tightly stretched rope, and Spain made use of it. The ropes sagged out and then snapped back, flinging Spain straight out at Zimmerman. As he came off the ropes, he swung his right.

That blow, backed by all the momentum of Spain's body, landed on Zimmerman's jaw with terrific force. I heard the sodden, solid smack of it. Brick dropped.

He went down all of a sudden, in a loose heap, the way a man does when he's hit squarely between the eyes by a bullet. Out like a light before he hit the floor.

They don't get up when they fall like that. I knew it, and so did Lefty. Olliphant was bending over Zimmerman, counting him out, but that was merely a formality. I'd have been up there in the ring before he finished if Lefty hadn't stopped me.

Lefty told me afterward that he wasn't sure how far the round had gone. He was afraid the bell might still save Zimmerman. But it didn't. Olliphant whirled and grabbed Spain's glove and held it high above his head. Tom was yelling something; you could see his

mouth wide open but you couldn't hear him.

You didn't have to hear. You knew.

I DON'T know yet how we ever got Spain out of that ring and up to his room in the Brill House. I looked for Paula as soon as I remembered her after the knockout, but she was gone. I saw Freck Johnson start up under the ropes and get clawed back and then dive under the ring platform to keep from being trampled. I had some trouble keeping from being trampled myself. I'm not a weakling, exactly, but it was all I could do to keep my feet and fend for Spain a little.

We picked up Bob Harvey somewhere between the ring and the Brill House, and you'd never have recognized the conservative banker that night. He was a wild-eyed fanatic, prouder of his position close to Spain than he was of his position as president of the Comanche First National. There must have been five thousand more just like him, but we fought through them somehow and got Spain to his room. Poe posted a couple of his deputies at the head of the stairs to keep the crowd from following us, and then he left us.

"If ever this town needed a sheriff t' be on the job," Poe said, "tonight's the night! You fought a good fight, kid, and I like you; but, as a favor to me, keep off the streets tonight, will you? I don't feel up to handlin' any bigger riot than I already got!"

"I'm leavin', too," I said. "If I don't get over to the Paystreak and start handin' out that bet money that crowd will tear the house down." I looked at Spain. "No use tellin' you I enjoyed the fight," I said. "You can tell that from the sound of my voice."

I was so hoarse I couldn't speak much above a whisper, and I didn't even know I'd been yelling.

Lefty was busy stripping the tape off of Spain's hands and he looked up.

"I reckon I ought t' go with you, Mac," he said. "This'll be a busy night at the bar, and I—"

I laughed at him.

"You ain't a bartender any more, Lefty," I said. "You're fired. If you want your job back tomorrow, come around and see me. Tonight you're a fighter's manager."

You should have seen the gratitude in the look Lefty gave me.

I stepped out then, and it surprised me a little to see Brick Zimmerman standing in the doorway to his room down at the front end of the hall. He was already dressed, and he beckoned to me. As I walked down toward him I figured out the explanation of his beating us to the Brill House. The crowd had followed Spain, I reckon, and Brick's handlers must have hustled him home by way of the alley.

Brick stepped back as I neared him and I stopped in the door of his room. There were three men there: Brick, and a couple of the men he had working for him up at his mine. It wasn't any festival, that little gathering wasn't; not from the looks of it. Padgett and Holden, Zimmerman's hired men, were scowling, and Brick himself looked like the wrath of God. His lips were blue and puffy, his nose was swelled, and there was a strip of tape pasted over the cuts above his eyes.

"Well, Mac?" Brick growled.

I said, "You fought a good fight, Brick. It was a tough one to lose."

He said, "To hell with the fight! That's over. Where's Harvey? He came in with you, didn't he?"

I nodded. "He's in Spain's room."

Brick grunted. "Hero-worshiper, eh? Well, that's okay. Where you goin' now?"

"Down to the Paystreak. I've got to start payin' off those bets before the boys tear the place apart. Brick—"

He grinned at me. "Don't say it,

Mac. It won't do you any good. My mind's made up. I'll give you an hour to pay off. It's midnight now. Say one o'clock. Okay?"

I said, "Okay," and left.

Which is why a part of what's left of this story has to be told from hearsay. I came into contact with things in a place or two, but aside from that I'll tell the details as I got them afterwards. They're accurate. I'll vouch for that. I ought to know.

CHAPTER XX

GUN TRAIL

BACK in Spain's room, Bob Harvey was in the middle of a talking streak. ". . . and what a crowd! I never thought I'd see a crowd like that in Comanche. I reckon the only two men in town who weren't there was Swede Olsen and Link Morgan, and they're in jail."

"What?"

Spain's exclamation stopped the flow of Harvey's talk, but only for a moment.

"That's right; you didn't know Link was in jail, did you? Yes, Poe found him snooping around Paula's party last night, and jugged him. Come to think of it, Poe said Link claimed he was looking for you. Poe tried to get him to say what he wanted with you, but Link wouldn't talk. Poe did gather, though, that it was something about the burning of the railroad bridge—"

"Railroad bridge?" Spain said.

"Yeah. You didn't know about that, either?"

"How the hell would I know about it?" Spain asked. "Remember, I spent the day in an old abandoned mine shaft! Keep talkin'."

"Well, that's about all there is to tell. The bridge burned, and Link claimed he knew something about it but wouldn't say what. Poe was some upset because today was clean-up day at the stamp-mill, and with no trains east it meant the gold had to be stored in the bank until the railroad could make arrangements to ship it. Poe had some wild idea that the bridge was burned on purpose to stop the gold and that somebody was figuring on robbing the bank."

"And of course," Spain said, "there ain't a chance of *that!*"

"Not a chance in the world," Harvey said complacently. "That new vault of mine is the latest thing; drill-proof, explosion-proof, and all the rest of it. And in the daytime, when the vault's open, Poe is posting enough deputies around the bank to stop anything short of the United States Army."

Lefty reached for Spain's lower lip just then and pulled it down and dabbed it with some sort of antiseptic, so Spain's comment wasn't intelligible.

Freck Johnson came busting in at that moment and said Spain's bath was ready for him, and Spain stood up and pulled Lefty's old moth-eaten robe around him and looked at Harvey.

"Stay here," he said. "I won't be long. I want to talk to you."

The one bathroom in the old Brill House was at the back of the upstairs hall. Freck Johnson had been busy ever since his escape from his hiding place under the ring, toting water from the kitchen, and the tub was so full that some sloshed out as Spain got into it. He took his time to it, soaking the soreness out of his muscles, lying full length in the cooling water while he added a couple of new facts to those already stored inside his head.

There wasn't any need for hurry, he thought. The town was still agog. He could hear the sounds of the celebration as he lay there: the hum of movement, the buzz of voices, the quick repeated crack of shots occasionally as some celebrant saluted the stars. Nothing would happen, he thought, in a town still seething with excited men.

And so it lacked possibly fifteen min-

utes of one o'clock when Spain gathered the robe around him again and walked back down the hall toward his room. He had one hand on the door knob when Paula spoke to him.

"Dal—"

She was standing at the head of the stairs, just down the hall. Spain turned a long searching look at her.

She came close to him and for a second he thought she was coming straight into his arms. But she didn't. She stopped just short of that.

"Dal—I shouldn't have come here, maybe, but I had to see you."

"I'm glad you came, Paula. Why shouldn't you? We're friends, aren't we?"

"I—hope so, Dal. Oh, Dal, you're not hurt, are you?"

He shook his head.

"You didn't come here to ask me that, Paula," he said gently.

"Halt! Stick 'em up!"

"No. I—Look, Dal. That announcement last night—that's what I came to tell you about. I had to explain."

She was finding the going pretty tough. Spain saw that, but he didn't try to help her.

"Tonight, after that third round, I went down to the ring. I don't remember starting, but all of a sudden I was there,

and I asked Mac if you were hurt. He—looked at me. I'll never forget the way he looked at me; as if I had no business being there. I hadn't, maybe, but—And then, after the fourth round had started, I jerked Lefty's sleeve and made him look at me and I asked him if you could win. He pulled away from me. 'What d'you care?' he said. 'You broke his heart, didn't you? What do you care what Zimmerman does to him?'"

She wasn't looking at him now. Her chin was down, and she was twisting one end of her scarf.

"I didn't know—That is, you'd never said—"

"I'll say it now," Spain said gently. "I love you, Paula."

Her eyes came up to him, and they were shining.

"And I love you, Dal." She said it gallantly.

But there was no joy in it for either of them.

"YOU had a right to know that, Dal. I'd hoped you'd say it, and then when I knew I was going to marry Zimmerman I was glad you hadn't. And I am going to marry him, Dal. This doesn't change anything; only, when Lefty said what he did say I knew I had to come and tell you . . . why."

Spain said, "I understand," and waited.

"It goes back to a long, long time ago, when dad was driving trail herds up from Texas." Paula was speaking swiftly now, pouring the story out. "Dad killed a man. Oh, that's not so strange, I know; those were wild, bad days. But the man dad killed was—George Poe's son."

Spain saw her lips tighten against the memory of that discovery.

"You see, I overhead Brick and dad talking about it. It was just after we'd told Mac about finding the money. Brick was demanding money threatening to tell Poe the truth if dad didn't pay him that four thousand dollars.

"Dad paid. I saw him reach under his pillow and get the money. He said, 'Damn you, Brick, you're ruining me. But I'd rather pay that let Poe know I had a hand in killing his boy. If he knew that he'd have to know the truth about Jack, and that'd kill him.'

"I was sort of dazed, I guess. Anyway, Brick came out of dad's room before I could get away, and he caught me. Then's when I promised to marry him, Dal. He said if I'd marry him he'd stop persecuting dad. I wouldn't at first; I said I'd tell Poe, that it couldn't be as bad as dad thought and Poe would forgive him. Brick laughed. He said it wasn't for Poe's sake that dad was paying him; that, if he told the truth, dad would—hang!"

Her voice broke jaggedly.

"And so I said I'd marry him. Dad doesn't know, Dal. I told him I loved Brick. He—he even tried to tell me how Brick was blackmailing him. But I wouldn't let him; I pretended I didn't understand; wouldn't listen. So that's—that's why. I had to tell you, Dal."

She stopped at last and Spain reached for her. "But, Paula! You can't go through with it! I'll put a stop to it! I *can* stop it—"

"But you mustn't, Dal. Not what you're thinking of. Don't you see, it'd be as if I'd sent you—to kill him? We couldn't build our lives together on—*that*, Dal. Don't you see we couldn't?"

He dropped his hands. He said, "I see. All right. I won't kill him. I came here to kill him, but I won't. I promise you."

Maybe he knew what he was doing by that promise, or maybe he thought that he could find a way that wouldn't end in a shoot-out between him and Brick Zimmerman. Or maybe he didn't give a damn any more. But he made the promise and turned away from her and left her standing there. She watched him open the door to his room and go inside and slam the door shut after him. And then she bowed her head and

walked down the stairs and across the lobby and out to Fremont Street.

LEFTY looked up as Spain entered the room. "Feel better?"

"I feel all right. Where's Harvey?"

"Gone. Zimmerman came to the door a while ago and asked Harvey to open the bank; he said he'd lost more on the fight than he had the cash to pay, and the winners was demandin' their dough."

"And Harvey went with him?"

Something in the way Spain said it made Lefty stare at him.

"Why, yeah. Harvey didn't want to much—said he'd promised Poe not t' open the vault at night. But Brick said he had to have the money and he was one o' Harvey's best customers, so what the hell? Harvey went. They just left."

Spain was reaching for his hat now, and Lefty stared at him.

"You goin' out? Poe said—"

"To hell with Poe! Throw me my belt! Whatever happens tonight, Poe can blame himself for not tellin' me about Link."

Lefty tossed the belt at him. "What's all the fuss?"

"Never mind that now," Spain snapped. "Get Poe! Tell him—"

He was struggling with his second boot now and he stopped talking. "Tell him to watch the bank. The front door, *sabe?* I want Poe where he can see that door, and I want him there pronto. Get him there, will you, Lefty? And *hurry!*"

Something in the way Spain looked told Lefty that questions wouldn't be welcome. He slammed the door behind him as he went out.

Spain snatched his gun-belt and buckled it around him. It took a second or two to tie the thong that held the tip of the holster down against his knee. When that was done, he jerked the gun out and opened the loading gate and spun the cylinder, making sure the gun was loaded. When he dropped it back into the leather again he let it down lightly, so it would come free easily in case he needed it.

There was a crowd in the hotel lobby and Spain turned back at the top of the stairs and went back through the upstairs hall and down the back way, into the alley. There were still lights burning and people moving around the ring to the south of him, so Spain turned north, crossed Seventh Street, went on up the alley to where a gap between two buildings gave him access to Fremont Street.

He waited there until a break in the traffic gave him a chance to cross Fremont without being seen; once across, he ducked between two buildings on the east side of the street and hit the alley back of them. Then he turned south, crossed Seventh Street again, and followed the alley till he came to the back door of the Comanche First National. It was the long way around, of course. The bank was almost directly opposite the Brill House, across Fremont; but going around was quicker than trying to break through the crowd in the Brill House lobby.

There wasn't any glass in the back door of the Comanche First National, and the door itself was solid oak with two-inch bands of steel crisscrossing it. But a forty-five caliber slug aimed at the wood between the steel bands could smash the lock, Spain thought; and a couple of shots more or less wouldn't be noticed in a town gone wild the way Comanche had.

So he pulled his gun and was fumbling there in the darkness for the knob that would tell him where the lock was located when he felt the door give.

It wasn't locked!

He stood there for a moment, thinking it over. It wouldn't take Harvey long to get his keys and get back to the bank. Maybe the thing was over already! Maybe that was why the door—

But Spain didn't think so. Lefty had said that Zimmerman and Harvey had "just left," and it was a quarter of a mile to Harvey's house.

It wouldn't be long now. Spain didn't have much of a plan as to what he was going to do, but there certainly wasn't time now to change whatever plan he did have. So he reached out carefully and shoved that door.

It swung in silently and Spain stood motionless, a little to one side of the opening, staring at it.

SPAIN took a deep breath and stepped inside. He had his gun in his hand, but he knew that it was a futile gesture. He couldn't have seen a target twice the size of a man even if it had been within a foot of his face. But the gun felt good and sort of comforting.

He slid to the left a foot or two, along the wall. He didn't like the darkness any better now that he was in it than he had from the outside looking in. It seemed to breathe—

He must have felt the blow coming before it struck. There'd been no sound, and he couldn't see anything, and nothing had touched him. Yet he let his head drop forward a little, and hunched his shoulders, and let his knees bend; so that when the blow struck him, his body gave with it.

But even so, it landed hard. It took the starch out of him, and his head felt as if somebody had busted it wide open with an ax. He went forward loosely into the darkness and the corner of a box on the floor opened an inch-long gash in his cheek. He landed hard, face down, and there was a man on top of him before he could move a muscle. He could hear the fellow panting, and he could feel stiff fingers reaching for his throat.

He wasn't unconscious. The blow had numbed him all over, and his head was bursting; but he could hear. He heard the door shut, and he heard the shuffle of feet in the darkness. Two set of feet, he thought. Two men, besides the one on top of him. But he couldn't be sure. . .

CHAPTER XXI

FALL GUY

THE fingers groping for Spain's throat seemed to sense his helplessness, for they no sooner found the hold they sought than they relaxed again. The weight on his back lifted slowly and somebody struck a match.

Spain heard the rasp of it in time to close his eyes. He didn't close them completely, but he closed them down to narrow slits that were hidden by the lashes. The light flared briefly and went out. But in that second or two of light Spain saw enough.

The man bending over him looked huge against the shadows, and he wore a hood.

He heard a startled whisper from the man bending over him. "It's Spain!"

One of the two men back of the hooded one spat out an oath. "The hell! You better finish him; we ain't got time to mess with him."

"No need for that." This was The Hood speaking again. "He's knocked cold. Head's cut wide open."

It seemed to Spain that this voice was strangely solicitous, under the circumstances.

"Well, get his gun. He might come to, and damned if I want him behind me with a gun when things start poppin'!"

"He ain't heeled. His holster's empty. He must've dropped his gun somewhere."

"Well, find it!"

"No need. He's out! He may be dead, for all I know. Listen!"

There was a sound at the front of the bank now and Spain felt a little surge of gratitude to it for coming when it did. His gun was under him. He could feel it

bulging up between the floor and his ribs, and he wanted it to stay there.

He heard the front door open and heard the murmur of Bob Harvey's voice. Zimmerman was with him. A light came into being somewhere and the faint glow of it made a lane of empty radiance along the floor a foot from Spain's face. He was in a cluttered storage room that served as a passage-way between the alley door and the main part of the bank. The door to the front of the bank was open.

The light grew stronger as Harvey and Zimmerman came back toward the vault, and Spain could see something of his own surroundings. The man in the hood was nearest him, close to the door leading into the front of the bank. He had a gun in his hand—a silver-mounted gun with bits of the white butt-plates showing through the spaces between the fingers holding it.

Zimmerman was talking to Harvey about the fight. "I don't know much about these Markis of Whozis rules, but if bouncin' off the ropes like that ain't a foul I'd like t' know what is! How you comin'?"

"Half done," Harvey said. "Hold the lamp so the light'll hit this other dial."

It got so still that Spain held his breath. He heard Harvey grunt finally and say, "There! Now all you got to do is pull."

A shadow moved out across Spain's line of vision, the shadow of a great slow-moving door and of two men. Those shadows stretched along the floor yonder in the front room, and up the wall. The shadow of the door went up out of Spain's level of sight, but the shadows of the two men stopped just a foot or so above the baseboard, their heads and shoulders etched against the wall. The taller shadow was Zimmerman's.

"There you are," Harvey said proudly. "Quite a job, even when you've got the combination, eh? How'd you like to have to open it without the combination?"

Zimmerman's answer was low and full of mockery. "That won't be necessary, Bob—not now!"

The man in the hood stepped through the doorway then, out into the lighted room.

"Hands up!" he said. "Up, Harvey! You too, Zimmerman!"

But Spain was watching those shadows on the wall. He saw the shadow that was Harvey turn swiftly, saw hands sprout out of the shadow's shoulders and lift slowly. Zimmerman's shadow sprouted hands, too. But one of Zimmerman's arms raised higher than the other one and then struck down. There had been a gun in that hand. The gun struck Harvey's head with vicious force.

Spain heard the blow, saw Harvey's shadow collapse swiftly and leave a vacant space there on the wall.

The man in the hood spoke hoarsely through the silence. "Damn you, Zimmerman! You've killed him! You promised me—"

"Hell, yes, I promised you! I wanted you *in* this. If you'd known I aimed to down Harvey, you'd have backed out! Pretty soft for you, the way you figgered it, eh? But he'd seen *me*. How long d'you think it would've taken Poe to figger I was mixed up in this—tollin' Harvey in here the way I did, with Harvey to testify? I'm not a fool. Come on! No time for talk; we ain't got all night! Padgett, get in there and start passin' the stuff out to us. You, too, Holden. Get the paper money, too. I got a satchel here to put it in."

Spain slid his right hand down under his ribs and found his gun.

Somebody tramped noisily along the sidewalk in front of the bank and all sounds ceased in the front room for a moment. Spain was on his feet now, standing in the shadow just inside the door. The man in the hood was so near

that Spain could have reached out and touched him.

The footsteps passed. Zimmerman laughed harshly. "Some drunk; he didn't even look this way. Now, when I put out the light, wait till your eyes get used to the dark and then walk to the front door. Keep close to the wall. Wait for a time when nobody's passin', and slide out. Take off your masks and you're safe. Split up and go different ways; then come back to the hotel and up to my room. Got it? Let's go!"

THE light went out.

The black curtain of darkness thinned gradually and Spain could see the lighter squares of the two large windows at the front of the bank, facing Fremont Street. It was moonlight out there, with lighted doors and windows in buildings across the street adding to the soft glow. Two big windows, with the heavy double doors between them. Shadows moving stealthily along the bank's side wall; vague, formless shadows, lacking all identity.

They reached the front and paused for a moment; then stood out suddenly in sharp black silhouette against one of the windows as they crossed to the doors.

It would have been easy, then, for Spain to slaughter them. Shooting into a massed target sharply outlined against a lighted backdrop, he couldn't miss. Even if they succeeded in shooting back at him they would have nothing but the flash of his gun to aim at. But Spain had no desire for that. He had intended, at first, to get the drop if he could, to hold them in the act until help came. Now, knowing Zimmerman's plans and the place of rendezvous, not even that was necessary. Trying to hold them alone, he might fail. It would be simpler, surer, to wait and come down on them with an adequate force after they had gathered again in Zimmerman's room. Besides, one of those men yonder was a man Spain didn't want to have to kill.

There was a thin strip of light between the windows now. The doors were opening. That strip widened swiftly; was blotted out by moving shapes. Spain held his breath. Poe; *where was Poe?*

"Halt! Stick 'em up!"

Spain heard Poe's challenge, answering his thought; heard a gun crack viciously and saw the red bloom of the shot in the street outside the south window. A gun answered crisply from the bank door. Spain swore and whirled.

He couldn't use the front door now. Going out that way would be plain suicide. He smashed through the storage room, stumbled once, recovered, found the alley door and jerked it open. Behind him, the guns were filling Fremont Street with their sharp argument.

Spain turned south in the alley, running along the rear of the post office. He turned right, onto Fremont Street.

The guns stopped talking suddenly and Spain stepped out into a street that was miraculously empty. Empty except for four men spaced in a ragged line opposite him, and two dark smears of shadow on the white dust in front of the bank.

Spain said, "Poe, it's me." And stepped out into the moonlight.

The four men waited and Spain joined them and then the thin line swayed forward slowly, curving as it moved. A man at Poe's left limped as he walked and Spain knew that it was Lefty. Poe said, "I got your message," and Lefty said, "You all right, Spain?"

Spain nodded and bent over the first of those two shadows sprawling in the dust.

He said, "Padgett," and straightened slowly. Over to the left, another man straightened and said, "This one's a guy named Holden, used to work for Zimmerman."

Spain let a pent-up breath sigh out of him. He had dreaded knowing who the dead men were. But this was all right.

He said, "Where's Zimmerman?"

Joe looked at him. "Zimmerman? Two men came out of the bank. We dropped 'em. Zimmerman?"

Men were stepping out of doorways now, poking their heads cautiously out. Their sharp excited questions made a running background of sound.

A narrow strip of dense shadow ran along the front of the Comanche First National, under its pillared overhang, and Spain swung toward it, walking with short quick steps. Poe followed him.

That strip of shadow held nothing now, but at its northern end, where the porch ended, Spain found a footprint in the dirt. Poe struck a match. A man had stepped backward off the porch there, had turned and run along the side of the bank toward the alley. Poe's match went out.

THERE were little groups of men around the two bodies in the dust of Fremont Street now, and other men were coming, cutting in from angles up and down the street. A man walked out of Seventh Street, past the corner of John Fink's store, and turned diagonally across Fremont toward the Brill House. He was a big man, broad shouldered, driving purposefully across the general current. And he carried a satchel.

Poe was speaking now, repeating a question with unhappy emphasis. "What's this about Brick Zimmerman? What made you ask—"

But Spain shook clear of him, walking with little eager steps out into the moonlight again. He said, "Hello, Zimmerman," very softly.

Zimmerman stopped and turned.

Something in that small incident laid a barrier across Fremont Street, intangible but absolute. Men to the south of that barrier turned to look, and men running from the north stopped short of it, leaving a zone between Brick Zimmerman and Spain.

Spain said, "Just drop that satchel, Zimmerman. The gold won't break. Poe wants the man that killed Bob Harvey."

I've often wondered, since, what Zimmerman thought in that moment before he went for his gun. He must have seen his whole world smashing under him; his pride, his arrogance, the things he loved, the things he had already won—all gone. He must have known that there was no hope for him; that, even if he downed Spain, the bag he carried in his left hand would damn him irrevocably, beyond any hope of salvation. The bag and the gun in the holster on his hip.

I can imagine him thinking, "I won't mind *anything* if I can kill Spain first!"

And so he drew.

Brick Zimmerman never made a quicker, smoother draw in his life than he made against Spain, and I think that was because this time he didn't care what happened to him.

The gun came up. I saw the yellow flame of it, a stabbing tongue that slanted down. It touched the dust ten feet in front of Zimmerman and, for a second, I thought that Brick's thumb must have slipped on the hammer; that he'd fired before he got the gun level.

He'd done just that, but not by accident.

I glanced at Spain. He looked smaller than ever now, standing there with the moonlight pouring over him, his feet apart, his knees bent slightly, a smoking gun at forearm's length ahead of him. Blood ran down his cheek in a thin dark line from the cut in his scalp where that blow in the dark had landed.

It was the echoes of the shots, I guess, that told me what had happened —double, stuttering echoes, as if two men had tried to clap their hands in unison and had failed by a fraction of a second.

I knew then why Zimmerman's gun had fired before he got it up.

Zimmerman took one slow backward step and stopped. His right arm hung

oddly askew and I saw him look down at it in a hurt, bewildered way. The gun made a little spurt of dust as it landed beside his boot.

He stood there for a moment, staring down at the hand that would no longer obey him. And then he turned and walked deliberately up the steps and through the door. He didn't hurry, and nobody tried to stop him.

CHAPTER XXII

CORNERED

THE first thing that flashed through my mind after Zimmerman disappeared through the door of the Brill House was a memory of a pet coon I'd tried to drag out of a hollow log one time when I was a kid. I'd had a rope on him and, without ever meaning to do it, I'd choked that coon to death trying to get him out of that log. It wasn't going to be an easy thing to get Brick Zimmerman out of that upstairs room, either.

Poe though of that at about the same time I did. I heard him swear. "Damn it, Spain, you missed him!"

Spain shook his head.

"I aimed high," he said slowly. "For the shoulder."

I said, "I'll get him," and walked past Spain and up the steps.

Poe made a motion to stop me, and Spain stopped him. I didn't see it, but I heard a rustle of movement behind me, and I heard Poe grunt.

Then Spain said, "Mac!"

I was up on the porch then and I turned and looked back at him. He said, "Good luck, Mac!" and smiled at me.

I stopped at the foot of the stairs in the lobby and looked up. Zimmerman was standing at the head of the stairs, around the angle of the landing. I couldn't see him, but I could see his shadow on the wall. He must have heard me walk across the lobby, because he said, "I've got another gun. I'll kill the first man that pokes his head up where I can see it."

I said, "It's me—Mac." And went on up.

Those first half dozen steps weren't pleasant, knowing that he was above me there in the shadows. But there wasn't anything I could do about it, so I kept going.

Brick waited long enough to make sure who I was and then he turned and walked back down the hall to his room.

He was sitting on the edge of the bed when I got to the door. The black satchel was on the floor between his feet and he sat sort of hunched over, with his right arm hanging between his knees and a gun in his left hand lying loosely on the bed beside him.

I guess he must have read my intention in my face. I saw his eyes question me and then veil over, and I saw his lips twitching.

He said, "You too, eh, Mac?" And twisted the gun and fired at me.

The bullet hit the frame of the door a foot from my head and Brick was cocking the gun again by the time I got my gun clear. I fired one shot and my slug caught him squarely between the eyes.

I laid my gun on the bed beside Zimmerman and picked his gun up and looked at it. I could hear men running up the stairs. There wasn't time to do much; but I made sure that Zimmerman's gun wasn't marked in any way, and so I kept it in my hand and walked back over to the door.

Spain was the first one through the door, and Poe was next. Spain shot one quick look at Zimmerman, then looked at me. He didn't say anything. Poe said, "You all right, Mac?" and I nodded and he walked over to the bed.

The hall was full of men now and I stepped into the doorway and blocked it. Poe slid his hand under Zimmerman's shoulders and lifted him and let him

down onto the bed again. I heard Poe grunt.

"Look here!"

He had something in his hand and Spain stepped over to him and took it between his fingers and looked at it.

Poe said, "That's the slug that killed him. Must've slanted down and barely got through the skin at the back of his neck. It was lodged against his collar."

Spain nodded and started to put the slug in his pocket. Poe stopped him. He said, "I'll take that, Spain." He had a funny look on his face.

It was Spain who made the next discovery. He stooped and pulled something out from under the bed and held it up. There wasn't any doubt about what it was. It was a black cloth sack with eye-holes in it.

Poe said, "Looks like that settles it," and shrugged.

He shooed us out of the room then and locked the door. He looked at me.

"I'll see you later, Mac, eh?" he said gently. "I—want to talk to you. You'll stick around?"

I said, "I'll be in my room, George."

I felt a little sick.

THE crowd followed him downstairs; all but Spain. I was standing against the wall, looking down at the gun in my hand, and Spain touched my arm and tipped his head toward the door of my room, across the hall. He said, "Feel like havin' a little talk, Mac?" I nodded and opened the door.

I laid the gun on the bureau beside the door and walked over and sat down on the bed. Spain sat down and started to roll a cigarette.

When he started talking finally it was in a casual, matter-of-fact sort of way, as if he were telling a not very interesting story more to kill time than for any other reason.

"It all goes back," he said, "to that day when I walked up to the Paystreak bar and ordered a lemonade. You see, this man Jorgensen had been in my home town for several days, dickering with dad about buying the ranch, and he'd had a lot of laughs at dad because dad always ordered lemonade. Dad's stomach went back on him and liquor made him sick, so he quit drinking it.

"I was away from home when all this happened, but I found out about it later. Several people told me how Jorgensen kidded dad about his drinkin' habits, so I figured that if I walked up and ordered lemonade in front of a man who might be Jorgensen I might get an interesting reaction. I did, too."

He lighted his smoke and smiled at me.

"You see, what really happened down there was this: Dad and Jorgensen never did get together on a price for the ranch; but Jorgensen wired his boss—the AC Cattle Company—that the deal was closed and they sent him a check which Jorgensen cashed. In the meantime, dad closed a deal with Ed Riley, the one-legged man. Riley was a stranger, without references, so dad asked for payment in cash. Jorgensen must have learned that; because he killed dad and Ed Riley, took Riley's money, took the money he'd got by cashing the AC Cattle Company's check, took dad's gun, hid the bodies—and checked out, leavin' his own gun on dad's body so if the bodies weren't found too soon folks would think it was him, Jorgensen, who was dead and dad, who was gone."

Spain shrugged. "It worked, all right. It worked so well that Jorgensen saw the possibilities in the mixed identities he'd caused and couldn't resist usin' them.

"You already know how I investigated the reports that starting comin' in of jobs done by Angel Spain, and how I finally landed here. I was pretty sure that the man I wanted was in Comanche; and practically the first man I laid eyes on after I hit town fitted the description I'd got of Jorgensen. That was Zimmer-

man. That's why I tried the lemonade business. You remember what happened.

"Well, I was convinced then that I'd found Jorgensen; but the hell of it was, I had to catch Zimmerman with the proof on him. He was Jorgensen, and he was The Hood; but my sayin' so didn't prove it. To prove he was The Hood, I'd have to catch him wearin' that black mask; and to prove that he was Jorgensen I'd have to catch him wearin' my dad's guns.

"There was a time when I thought that business about the horse with the white spot on his hip was important; but I soon saw that a man with a can of whitewash could make any sorrel fit that description.

"So then I started checkin' up on The Hood. Zimmerman had a swell alibi for the Nugget job. I found out by a little careful askin' of questions that he was playin' poker that night in the Neuces saloon. But I couldn't find any alibi for Zimmerman the night those two men from the Yellow Star were robbed. The Manning Doran affair stumped me, too, for a while; but we'll come back to that later. Zimmerman was playin' poker again the night The Hood held up the station over at Lyman Junction. He even had George Poe in the game with him, that time; so there was no getting around *that* alibi. He was playin' poker with *me* the night The Hood took a shot at me through the window; and he was standing right beside the ring, watchin' me fight McCoy, the night of the Ascension mine robbery."

Spain paused and smiled.

"It began to look as if I was barkin' up the wrong tree, eh? But I was still sure Zimmerman was my man, else how would he know about that lemonade business? So I started checkin' back over that Manning Doran hold-up. The catch there was—how could Zimmerman have known that Doran had that money? Well, Zimmerman had just walked out of the Paystreak, after our little tussle, when Bob Harvey walked over to Paula and she told him her dad wanted him to open the bank. I didn't hear what she told him, but it came out later. Now if Zimmerman had happened to stop just outside the door, he could've heard what Paula told Harvey, gone to his room, got his mask, beat it over to the livery barn, done the job and got back to his room again while Morgan was bringin' the word to us."

"That's how it was," I said. "Brick told me—"

Spain nodded. "So then I got to thinkin' about what Zimmerman said, that day in the livery barn, about his bein' twins. It occurred to me that any man that happened to be pretty close to Zimmerman's size and build could put on that hood affair and nobody'd ever know the difference. In other words, The Hood might be *two* men."

Spain chuckled.

"So there I was, up a tree again. I had to figure out who was Hood Number Two. I took a good look at Olsen, then. He was the right size. *You* handed me a nice tip on Olsen, too, tellin' me how far he lived from his neighbors and how he could've sneaked away without anybody knowin' it. But Olsen was in jail when the Ascension Mine was robbed, so that cleared him.

"I THOUGHT then that Morgan might be my man, but but I found out from Paula that Morgan had taken her to a dance the night of the Nugget hold-up and had been with her the night the two men from the Yellow Star were held up; so that cleared him.

"All this time I was gatherin' more evidence against Zimmerman, too. As soon as I was sure Morgan was out of the running, I sent him up into the hills to hide out where he could keep an eye on Zimmerman's mine. I'd done some investigatin' about that mine myself,

"We were saints compared to him."

and I was pretty sure Zimmerman wasn't gettin' gold out of it like he said he was doin'. I figured, too, that those men Zimmermen had workin' for him up there would bear watching. It was a slick idea, though, that mine. It gave Zimmerman a source to explain the gold he had to sell. He must have known, though, that I was getting pretty close to him when I made that crack about his bein' the only mine that produced different kinds of gold.

"But I was still hunting Hood Number Two. I finally got a man in mind that might fit, and I began checkin' his alibis the way I had checked Zimmerman's. This jasper didn't have any alibi for the time of the Nugget job. He had an alibi for the time the two men from the Yellow Star were held up, but Zimmerman didn't.

"This jasper Number Two had an alibi for the Doran business, but I'd already figured how Zimmerman might've done that. Zimmerman was alibied for the

Lyman Junction job; the second man wasn't. Both Zimmerman and my other suspect were in the Paystreak the night a man in the hood took a shot at me through the window; but the glimpse I got of that jasper at the window made me suspect that he wasn't tall enough to be the real Hood anyway, so I figured one of Zimmerman's hired men could have worn the hood that night on purpose to give Zimmerman and this other man both alibis.

"That brings us down to the Ascension job. Zimmerman had an alibi, and—so did this other man. At least, it looked as if he did.

"But there was one thing wrong with that Ascension job. That inkwell that was supposed to have hit the night watchman, Simpson, was a heavy thing, remember? It seemed damned funny to me that that explosion would throw that heavy inkwell clear across the room and not upset the flimsy, top-heavy bookkeeper's desk the inkwell had been sittin' on!

"So, when I found out that the safe could've been open without bein' blown, I began to look closer at the alibi this Number Two hombre had to offer. I figured he might've slipped up there, stuck Simpson up, tied him, opened the safe, took the gold out of it, closed it again and poured the 'soup' into it, set the fuse—then gone back to where Simpson was lyin' and hit Simpson over the head with the inkwell, at the same time firin' off his gun so Simpson would remember hearin' that sound and think he'd heard the explosion. The explosion would come later, and given as much as ten minutes difference in time, this Number Two jasper of mine could have pulled the job and got back to where he was supposed to be in plenty of time to fit into his alibi."

Spain stopped talking then and looked down at the cigarette he held between his fingers. It had gone out. He dropped it and set his boot on it, and stood up and walked away from me. He stopped by the dresser and stood for a minute looking down at the gun I'd laid there; and then he came back over to the bed and laid a hand on my shoulder.

I knew what was coming.

He said, very softly, "What made you do it, Mac? What dragged you into it?"

CHAPTER XXIII

ONE WAY JOURNEY

SO now, maybe, a lot of things are clear to you; such things as why Brick Zimmerman went tense that first day when I looked up at him standing on the balcony of the Brill House and he knew that I'd gladly kill him for what he'd done to Manning Doran; such things as why I dreaded George Poe's questioning that day. Or maybe you knew it all along. Looking back at it now, it seems to me the truth stood out.

As I said, I knew what was coming. But that didn't seem to soften the jolt much. I guess my voice was pretty husky when I finally spoke. "How long have you known?"

Spain shrugged. "Remember the time you told me how much you paid for the Paystreak? Up to then, you'd been a cowhand. I got to wondering how a forty-dollar cowboy could all of a sudden set himself up in a twenty-odd thousand dollar business. Then, while you were lying in bed here, I happened to lay my hand on your arm. It was bandaged. I could feel the bandages through your sleeve. And I remembered that the man who stuck up the Lyman Junction station cut his arm gettin' through the window. I tried to warn you—"

"Yes," I said. "Yes, I know you did."

"And then, tonight, of course," Spain said, "I recognized your voice, in the bank." Spain looked up suddenly. "One thing I *don't* know: how'd you get out of the bank afterward?"

I shrugged. "I was still inside the bank when the shooting started, so I cut back through the bank to the alley. I wasn't a dozen feet behind you when you went through that back door."

Spain nodded thoughtfully. "Then, after you shot Zimmerman, that business about the guns—" He frowned. "It's too bad Poe had to find that slug, Mac. Or, too bad it couldn't have been battered up worse. You could tell it was out of a Smith & Wesson gun, anyway. Wide grooves; grooves slanting right. And the gun you had in your hand was a Colt. You swapped guns with Zimmerman, I reckon, after the shooting was over."

I nodded. "Swapped guns, and tossed the hood under the bed. I didn't want that thing found on me. Poe'll find another hood among Zimmerman's things, I reckon. We each had one."

"But the gun you carried in the bank, the gun you shot Zimmerman with, was one of dad's. We found the other one of dad's guns down in the street where Zimmerman dropped it. But you were going to tell me how you got dragged into all this. Or *were* you?"

"I'll tell you," I said. "I knew Zimmerman then; or Jorgensen either—back in the old days. He was a youngster then, but plenty tough. I wasn't pure and innocent, myself. I was fast with a gun, and—I was mixed up in some things I'm not proud of. Zimmerman knew that; that's why he dared to talk to me, after he stumbled onto me here in Comanche. But the real hold he had on me was that business about Jack Poe."

I saw Spain start.

"Jack Poe was George Poe's son," I said. "I said I was wild in those days, and that Zimmerman was tough. Well, we were saints compared to Jack. The woman Poe married must've been a hellcat; that's the only way I can figure George Poe's son bein' as rotten-mean as Jack Poe was. He was a cow-thief, and a crooked gambler, and worse. Jack was hanging out along the cattle trails, raiding the herds comin' up from Texas. I happened to be the one to catch him. I was working for Doran then, and he held a kangaroo court; Doran's outfit, and men from two or three other trail crews near us. Doran was judge. There wasn't any question about Jack's guilt. He didn't even take the trouble to deny it. He had the cattle with him, and he'd killed two men in takin' 'em. We passed sentence on him, but there wasn't a tree anywhere around there big enough to hang him on, so we cut cards to see who'd kill him. It fell to me."

Spain said, "The hell! But—Paula said it was her dad that killed him! She said Brick told her Doran killed Jack Poe and went on the dodge because of it; that Doran would hang if the truth were told—"

"Brick lied. So that's why Paula said she'd marry him?"

Spain nodded. "Zimmerman was blackmailing Doran. But if Doran wasn't guilty, how could Zimmerman blackmail him?"

"Because of Poe," I said. "Doran and I and Poe are—friends. Manning and I swore, the night Jack died, that George would never know the truth. We lied to him; made up a nice neat story. Tellin' him the truth would've broken his heart. Zimmerman was blackmailin' me, too, in a way. In a different way from what he used on Doran. He said if I didn't help him, he'd tell Poe—"

"I see," Spain said. "Damn it, Mac, I'm sorry. . ."

I said, "Don't, Spain. I'll take my medicine. I've got it coming to me. It's true I made myself think I was doin' what I did to protect Poe. But that's the bunk. It was different with me than it was with Doran. Manning never was any great shakes with a gun. But I—I could've killed Zimmerman; shut his mouth that way, if I had wanted to . . .

The truth is, I reckon, if I hadn't had a bad streak in me Brick never could've talked me into it. I'd already done some things, back yonder, that sort of caloused my conscience; and Brick's scheme — usin' your dad's identity; two men usin' the hood disguise, each man fixin' up an alibi for the other—looked too good to pass up. It looked like a quick, easy way of getting the cash for that horse ranch I always wanted."

I tried to grin. "One thing I do want you to know, though. I had nothin' to do with stickin' up Doran. And I didn't know that Brick aimed to kill Harvey, either. The plan was that we were to get in the bank through the back door and wait till Zimmerman brought Harvey in to open the vault. Then we were to stick 'em both up. Harvey himself would've sworn that Brick was innocent if it had been worked right. It wasn't until Brick made that crack about not needing to try gettin' into the vault without the combination that I knew he meant to down Harvey."

"I KNOW," Spain said. "Even after he said that, you tried to go through with the plan to cover him. And it was you, I reckon, who made Brick return that money to Doran."

I nodded.

"And then," Spain said, "Brick got it back again, by blackmail! Oh, he was smart! Look how he apologized to me; played friendly, so when his hired man killed me he'd be in the clear!"

He got up suddenly and walked to the window. "You know, Mac, if I was a lawman, I'd have to—But I ain't! A man could build himself a mighty pretty layout for raisin' horses, down in Texas or somewhere. And with Lefty Sullivan just achin' to own the Paystreak—It's a shame you can't just sell out to Lefty and . . . raise horses."

He turned and looked at me.

"I'm goin' down and find Poe," he said slowly. "Reckon I'll take him over to his office and have a good long talk with him. There's at lot of things Poe ought to know about this business that I could tell him. Poe's already doin' some thinkin' about that slug, you know. The one that killed Zimmerman. Sooner or later, he's bound to put two and two together and get an answer. You didn't tell Poe how *long* you'd stay here in your room, did you? If you had any business you wanted to tend to . . . down at the Paystreak, or anywhere . . ."

The silence in the room lengthened painfully.

"Tomorrow," he said softly, "I'm going to have a talk with Paula. I'll tell her—what you've told me, Mac. And what I've found out. She'll have to know. But I'll tell it in a way so she'll understand. Just as I do."

His hand came out. I took it.

"So long, Mac," Spain said softly.

"So long," I said.

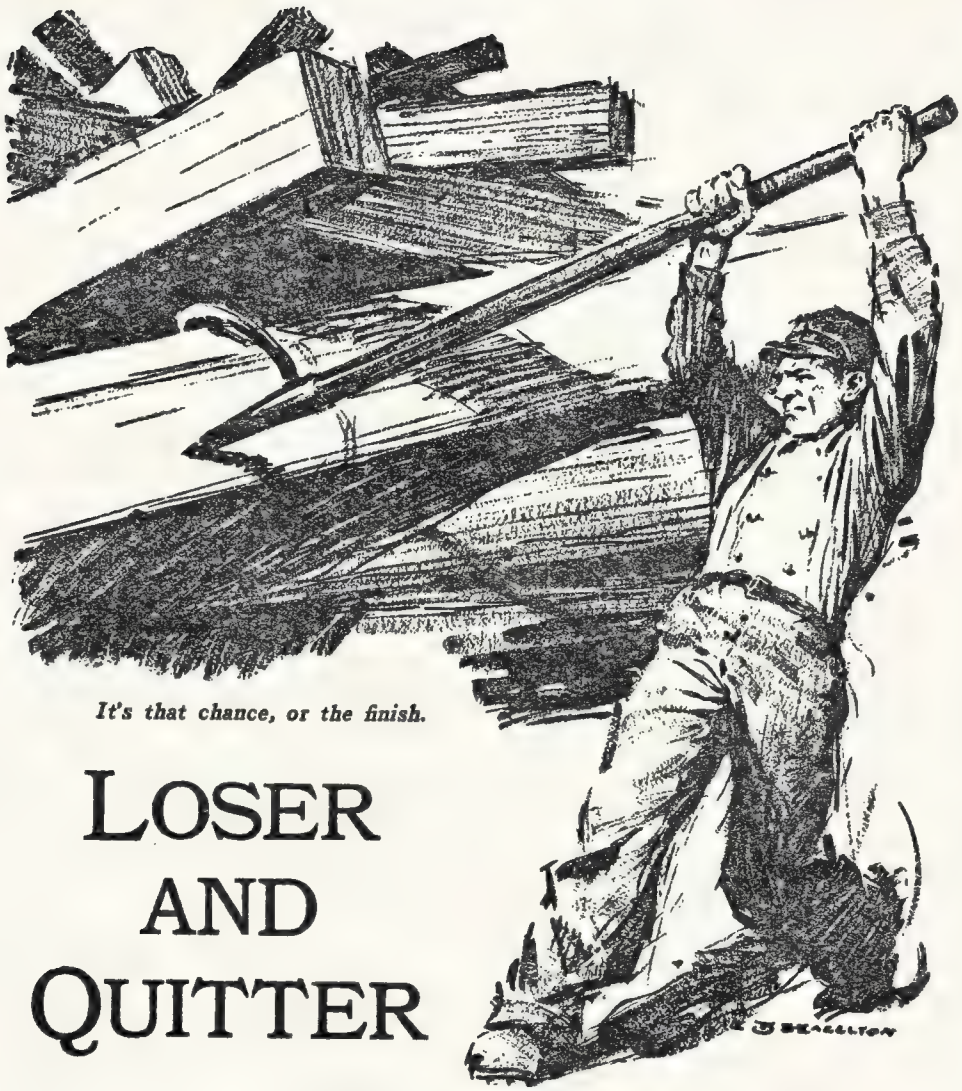
WELL, I sold the Paystreak to Lefty that night, while Spain kept Poe in his office. Lefty paid me a fat down payment out of his fight winnings, and gave me his note for the balance.

So—I've got my horse ranch now. Unless I'm crazier than I think I am, that colt of mine—the one listed in the stud books as "The Comanche Kid"—is going to take a blue ribbon at the Texas Centennial. The deed to the ranch isn't recorded under the name of Sandy McNair, exactly; but that wasn't the name I wore in Comanche, either. So that's all right.

And Spain must have kept his promise mighty well, about what he was going to tell Paula. I had a letter from her just the other day.

She signs her letters with one word: "Paula." But the return address on the outside of the envelope is always "Mrs. Dallas Spain."

THE END



It's that chance, or the finish.

LOSER AND QUITTER

by James Stevens

I WAS waiting in the sawmill office that morning for the yard copies of the day's lumber orders, when Rick Powell hit me for a job.

"Any kind of job, Gabby," he says. "Any that's open, I'll take it and like it."

For a couple of seconds I was bothered witless to see Rick Powell again, and the shape he was in. Which was natural. Three years back I was a straw at the big Tumwater plant of the Amalgamated, pushing the sorters on the green-chain. Powell was some notches up, rating as plant super, though he was two years shy of thirty. The sawdust savages called him the boy wonder, and in a way he was. I'd moved to a better job down the timber coast, and later it grapevined to me Powell was let out, account of some trouble or other.

"Any kind," he says again. "Just so it's a job."

He looked bad. Not in the way of

being sick, or dogged down, but plain hard-used. His mackinaw was a rag, his overalls was patched four ways, and he wore shoes instead of caulk boots—a shame to any timber-worker. He had no hat on, and his hair was all shiny from the rainy weather. His eyes was the same that used to put the authority into me at Tumwater, with grin crinkles at the corners, and a glint of chilled steel deep in 'em.

I pulled myself together and passed a remark or two about it was prime to see him again, alive and kicking, and so on. Then I says, "I ain't got a job open you'd want to use."

"If it's a job," he chops back, "I'll use it, Gabby."

I had to let him have it.

"It's this way," I says, low so's it don't drift to others in the office. "The chief has put out special orders about hiring hobos. I'm not sayin' that's your tally," I adds quick, "but you know how you look, and the chief already has a ax out for me. Only job I could take a chance to put you on is the timber chute. It uses four human mules. You'd have to set in with Big Anton Stovarich on the long side. He's hell on his partners, which is the reason the job is open. He wouldn't stand, neither, for nobody but a Bulgarian."

"Then I'm a Bulgarian," Powell comes back.

"Don't be batty," I argues. "You let me rig you up with some clothes and give you a stake to some white man's outfit."

Like that, I tried to talk him out of it. I owed Rick Powell something, for he given me a job at Tumwater when it looked like the Magoon family was due to go on relief. But it was no use talking.

"I want a job, Gabby," he mules back at me. "Work and wages, and no damn' thing else from any man! I'm your Bulgarian, or you can go to hell. I'm no bum. A loser, but no quitter, Mr. Magoon!"

Well, what could I say to that? I says it, and Rick Powell goes to take a try at teaming up with Big Anton Stovarich.

He headed out, and Celia McCarren came over to the counter from her typewriter desk.

"That was sweet of you, Gabby," she says.

"Oh, yeah?" I says. "Sure, I'm fit to be poured on a stack of hot-cakes. What do you know about that guy?"

"Not even his name, Gabby. I didn't listen in, but I could tell what was on deck. That man is all man, or I'm a Swede," Celia states. "And it was sweet of you to give him a man's chance."

Celia is an okay kid, only kind of on the gushy side, and I don't mind her any. Only the mill push, who is up the counter, hears her and he given me a ogle and a sissy flutter of his hands. My ears turnt hot, and I growls, "It's no chance. He won't last a hour with Big Anton."

Somehow she is all steamed up, and starts to make it a argument, with the mill push grinning at us like a ape. I was plenty relieved when the door of the manager's office opened and Lewis Wyall come out. He didn't say anything; he never needed to. He just give us the shark eye. The mill boss high-tailed, the order clerk and me got busy, and Celia skipped back to her key-pounding.

Wyall called me over to one end the counter when I have my working orders. He asks me casual, "You gave Rick Powell a job?"

"Why, yes," I says, bothered to hear the chief speak the name. "I sent him for a tryout with Big Anton. The timber chute has been so much grief I'm fit to try anybody on it. Ain't I done right?"

"It's your responsibility, Magoon. That's all."

And that was all Wyatt said. But he said it in a way that filed through to my back hair, and I knows it's a wrong morning, and I am in a jam account of

Rick Powell. I was some sore-headed when I ploughed out to the yards.

THEY was nothing right about that morning. A wet gale was tearing up Sooner Bay, and this kind of winter weather always glooms a man and balls up his work. Breakfast time I been weak enough to dip into the pickle jar, and them pickles turned cold in me while I brooded on that threat of Wyall's.

He had a ax out for me anyhow. When he taken charge at Sooner three months ago he brung along his own bosses and top timber-workers, and it was only the recommend of the old manager that saved my neck. It was account I was a family man. Wyall had agreed I was to stick long as I done my work.

It was ten minutes to starting time, so I cut over to the timber chute, where I seen Rick Powell bunched up there with Big Anton and the two short-side hunks, who was called Yanko and Pete. As I come nigh my ears go limp to hear Powell guttering away in Bulgarian, or whatever it is hunks gab. Big Anton and the other two are listening bug-eyed. Then, of a sudden, they begun to whoop and holler till they drowned out the noise of the saws warming up in the mill.

"What's so funny?" I snarls at Powell.

"A story," he says. "I was telling 'em about a Hunyok whose legs were sheared off in a logging-railroad accident up the coast. In the hospital he screamed and cried without a letup, in his own tongue, until the docs and nurses were crazy. I happened to be called in, and I soon savvied what he wanted. He wanted to walk. That's what he was crying for. That's the joke."

"I don't see it," I says.

Anton Stovarich had listened to Powell tell me, and how he busts out all over himself, laughing till you could of heard him a mile.

"Hawnh-hawnh!" he roars. "The feller's legs was cut off—and he want to walk! He want to walk, tamn' fool, and he got no legs!"

"So that's what a Bulgarian calls a joke," I says.

"Yes," says Rick, with a grin that wasn't a grin. "Us Bulgarians."

I pulled him over to one side. Then I snarls again, "What about you and Lewis Wyall? I mean, the manager."

Powell's hungry face set in lines like grooves of iron.

"Believe me, Gabby, I didn't know Lewis Wyall was the Sooner manager when I shipped here," he says, quiet-like. "I landed broke. Right here I win or lose, work or die. I've sworn to that."

"Go on," I growls, "about you and Wyall."

He shook up his big shoulders. "We grew up in the same timber town, on Puget Sound. My folks were beach squatters, Lewis lived in the biggest house in town. He had two years on me, and he bullied me ragged till I began to get my growth. The first licking I gave him, it was a pay-back for all I'd taken. The Wyalls set the law on me, and I rambled. Years later, after Lewis was through college and I'd worked my way up in the woods, we met again at Tumwater. I'd been sent there to run production. Lewis was in line for the job, and I was stepped over his head. He quit, without a fight. And then—well, that's the story. What do you say, Gabby?"

Well, what? Damn, there I was, jammed proper. Needing to keep my neck in the clear from Wyall on the one side, and me owing Rick Powell something and him a good guy who was down on the other. It was kick out the guy who was down, or risk losing my job which a family depended on it for their eats. I sure felt cross-hauled.

So that was why I give it to Powell like I done when I says, "Get on the

damn' timber chute," I snarls, "and I hope to hell Big Anton unears you, you ape!"

He taken a breath like a man up from a dive to bottom water.

"Thanks, Gabby," he grins, and it was a grin this trip.

He went to say more, but I was already smoking off for the dry sheds, feeling like a fool, account I'd gone so sentimental with Rick Powell. I was so sore-headed I never passed a remark outside the work when I went to line out the graders. The morning seemed wronger than ever. Most time I given and taken cracks with the men, and we end up with a poke in the ribs to show it is no hard feelings, and go to work with a humor. That's my way of handling 'em.

Like the morning before, when Les Hopper, the head grader, says, "All a guy needs to work for Gabby Magoon is a strong back and tin ears." And I smacks it back to him, "So it's tin that rattles in your head, hey? Hell, and I figgered all along your brain was broke down from heavy thinking and it was loose parts a-rattling." And I given Les a nudge which broke three of the tally pencils in his vest pocket, and the men get the joke and have a laugh all round and all are in a humor for their work.

This morning, though, I snapped and snarled through the graders, the dock crew and the pilers, and I brimstone a carrier-puncher who has spilled a load of random merch till he boils. When I rounded back to the mill side I found the green-chain down from a cracked drive-sprocket, and the light lumber piling up at the head of the sorting table. And Lewis Wyall was out, shark-eying the millwrights while they work on the drive. I was so smoked up by now I bumped into the chief before I hardly seen him.

"Magoon, you've kept Powell on," he says, making each word sound like a lick with a hammer.

All I could think of was to stutter, "Why, yes Big Anton likes him, and so—"

Wyall changes his tune.

"Oh-hoh," he drawls out, like he's heard big news that about knocks him over. "Big Anton likes him. So that's how it is. Big Anton likes him! Well, well, well!"

Damn, I'll take a slam-bang bawlout any trip over that sarcastic line which is snake-quiet while it bites under your hide. But it was Lewis Wyall's natural way.

I keep my jaw toggled somehow, and Wyall snapped around and swung on for the stairs to the sawing floor of the mill. Halfways up he stopped and gazed over to the timber chute, where Rick Powell and Big Anton is working the heavy stuff like they been a team since they was pups. And if ever I seen a man look cold, mean hate, Lewis Wyall done it then. Them pickles turnt over in me and I see green.

I mean, I was sick account I been a fool not to take that hint of Wyall's as the threat and order it was, and heed it in time. For now it's plain Wyall is hell-bent on throwing the hooks into Rick Powell. Same time I'm bound to get mine, too, for Lewis Wyall packs the authority. When he heads on up into the millhouse, I know plenty is due to happen right now on the timber chute.

EVERY tidewater mill on the timber coast is built to cut big stuff—railroad ties, bridge stock, structural beams, mine timbers, squared logs for shipment to woodworking city mills, and the like. The modern mills uses automatic trip-rigs and traveling crane setups to handle the big stuff, but the Sooner outfit was old-time.

The big stuff was routed out from the cutoff saw over a line of steam-drive rollers which run into the open from the end of the millhouse. They was twenty-odd feet aloft, on trestle construction.

Iron-shod skids sloped down to a long, waist-high banking deck. The timbers slid sidewise down the skids from the rollers, and the chuters would mule them on to a two-wheeled transfer truck. Then they had to roll the truck to one of the loads which was spread out fanwise from the chute, and heave the timber off. On the short side of the chute, next to the mill, the timbers come down with even ends. On the long side the two chuters there had to work in close, say on ties, then maybe far out on hundred-footers, like struc timbers.

It was the roughest kind of mule labor on the old-time Sooner chute, even when a proper share of the mill cut was light lumber routed to the green-chain sorting table. This morning, when Lewis Wyall ordered the mill push to cut heavy on timbers, work on the chute was plain hell.

That was what Wyall done, used his authority to throw the hooks into Rick Powell. Likely it looked to him like the surest and safest play he could make. Wyall had never been faced up with the need to work or die, and he never knowed what it meant. So far he'd always been a winner. Even when he quit the Amalgamated that time Rick Powell was jumped over him, right off he found an assistant super's job open with the Great Western. Then he came on up without a struggle. When the G. W. bought into the Sooner Bay Company last fall, and he was put in as manager, Lewis Wyall had himself sized up as a born winner.

That's how I tallied him anyhow. He looked, acted and talked at all turns like nobody or nothing had a chance to stop him or even to tell him anything. Sooner was nothing but a backwater timber town. Wyall was the brains in a outfit of workstock. Day by day, especially after Celia McCarren come to Sooner, you could see him put on authority. He hated Rick Powell, account of Rick had two times showed him up as a quitter. That's how I come to figure it out.

I allow I'm gabbing, but that's how I am, hell on figuring folks out and arguing the answers.

Well, to get back to cases, that morning it was a heavy timber cut while the green-chain was down, which was proper. Then, after the chain was rigged up again, the timbers kept rolling without a break from the mill. I went up and put in a kick, and it was no good. The push passed the buck. Noontime it was a pileup on the banking deck, and the chuters had to hustle back out after they eat, and work overtime to clear off the jam. And Lewis Wyall goes out of his way to order me I'm to put no extras on the chute crew.

"It has always been a four-man job," he says, "and it still is. And it's your job to see to that. Understand, Magoon?"

Wyall meant if the chute wasn't handled as is, he'd get four men and a yard push who could handle it, and no kickback on him. I headed on out through that damn' wet gale and put it up to Rick Powell. It was working time now, and the big stuff was thundering down the skids from the rolls. Over at the sorting table hardly half the usual cut of light lumber was on the green-chain. Rick never needed much telling to savvy what him and the hunks was up against.

For a couple of seconds or so he seemed to shrink down in that ragged rig of his, and his eyes go dull in his hungry face. Then he stiffens, shakes up his shoulders and bats a fist at his face, hard. When the fist comes down I see steel.

"Listen," I says, "you ain't got a chance. Whatever you do, Wyall will keep throwing his authority till he gets you."

"We are handling the chute," he says, in his quiet-like way.

"Who's we?" I argue. "Hell, how long you think them hunks will stand the

gaff when they savvy this heavy cut is account of you?"

"Us Bulgarians," murmurs Rick, "stick together. Watch and see."

He wheeled around and bunched Big Anton, Yanko and Pete up at the transfer truck. For a minute or two he guns their gab at 'em, telling them, as I learn later, about him and Wyall just like he told it me. What happened then showed me you are never too old to learn. Up to now hunks was just workstock to me, and I never bothered to kid 'em along like I done the natives. Even Big Anton, I figured, was only a huge work-ox who had no more'n a bullheaded pride in his muscle.

He is a lob of a man who stands in a stoop like his shoulders and arms was so heavy they sagged him over, and his shaggy head bulling out from them monster shoulders. He would size up as a hellion proper, only he's commonly got a grin so wide it flaps his ears, and eyes as bulgy and gentle as a cow's. And now I learn this here Anton Stovarich has got plenty wild bull in him. When Rick is done, he begins to beller at Yanko and Pete, and they jabber back at him, and then they jabber at Rick and pound him on the back, and finally, damn' if they don't tear into their work like crazy men!

"Watch us," Rick calls to me. "Us Bulgarians!"

I watched them, right enough, until I had to start on my rounds, and every other chance I had that afternoon. And they handled that chute. Every trip back to the mill I'd sink inside, like you do in stud-poker showdown when the hole cards is turnt over. And I'd want to yell when I'd come into sight of that chute and see the banking deck clear, or only a small pile on it. Was them four having at it! Or seven, I ought to say, for Rick and Big Anton was like a extra man and a half. It wasn't work. It was a fight.

That was a Monday, and by the end of the second day Lewis Wyall knows he has started something. By that time the hundred-odd men of the Sooner Bay crews, hunks and all, is steamed up to lay bets, and argue and dogfight about the battle the chuters is making. All know that Wyall can't put on much more pressure. Even as it is the mill push and head sawyer are wasting clear timber that ought to go into flooring, finish, and the like, to make a heavy cut of the big stuff. And by now Wyall can't fire the chuters, long as they do their work, without raising a row, maybe a strike, among the hunks.

Anyhow, so Celia McCarren tells me, Wyall don't let on he even knows the chuters are alive. She works up the nerve to hop him, and he tells her he leaves such details as job-handling to his bosses.

BUT on Wednesday Wyall bore down. It was by way of a government dam construction order that was no rush, and according to the lineout of the work, cutting wouldn't start on it for three weeks or more. The main part of the order was for squares, three foot by three, and a hundred long. Wyall steps this order ahead. It taken the heart out of me when them babies begun to crash down the skids. All I could see was me, Rick, Big Anton, Yanko and Pete going down the line talking to ourselfs, late or soon.

That noon it was a pileup on the deck which they didn't get clear even by working the lunch hour. And by around 3:30 that afternoon it was a mountain on the banking deck. At that time I bump into Celia McCarren when I'm heading for the mill side of the yards. It was still blowing cold rain off the bay, but Celia was standing out on the open dock, watching the work at the chute. Her eyes was simply tied on Rick Powell, and she never noticed me when I hauled up nigh her.

Damn, I forgot her while I watch Rick Powell take the lead in that tim-

ber fight. He handled a peavey like he been weaned on it, and maybe he had. Peavey work can be mighty pretty when you know the fine points of it, like I did, and Rick Powell had 'em all.

He would seem to pick a key timber from that mountain jam by instinct, and he'd twirl the peavey up, flip the gooseneck back, and spear in for a bite and prize without missing a lick. Every trip he made a mess of them timbers say uncle and tear loose from the jam.

And it was fast going, I mean. He'd mule in with Big Anton and plough the big sticks on to the transfer trucks, the four would rush them out to the loads, fight 'em off; then Rick would leg it back on a run, lunge for the jam with his peavey, and have another bunch out by the time the hunks has caught up with him. Damn, it was pretty!

Then, one them hundred-foot government squares come galloping out on the high rollers. Right now Rick is in under the jam on the deck, working out a tangle of ties. I looks up and see the big stick tripped down the skids. The long end swung ahead, down that steep slope. I see in a flash it will hit the long side of the jam like a giant baseball bat, and knock the timber pile antigoggling. And as I sees I yells.

What happened next was in seconds. Rick let all holts go at my yell and went to make a flat dive under the banking deck. Same second he spied Big Anton coming in, head bulled down, as always. Rick kind of jerked and staggered; then he thrown himself at Big Anton's knees, taken him to a fall, and rolled him under the deck—just when the jam is batted to hell by the hundred-footer, and timbers heave, crash, roar and spill over the side of the deck.

Rick and Anton disappeared under that mess. Right then Celia McCarren given a choked scream like somebody had her by the neck, and she stumbled to me with her hands over her eyes, and I'm holding her up. I'm bothered witless, busting to plough into that mess at the chute, and I don't know what to do with this armful. It's like I always tell the missus, women got no damn' business around a sawmill.

Then, out from behind a stack of lumber, looms Lewis Wyall. When I spot him, stepping cocky and cool as though nothing is happened, and in that fancy belt raincoat, shiny lace boots and choke-bore pants he wears like he was a lousy general, I boil. I mean, I had to pop off.

"They's two men under them timbers, and you put 'em there!" I yells. "You buzzard-bred, hellion-hatched, murdering—"

It was a scream from the McCarren kid stopped me before I said anything really rough to Wyall. I'd forgot her when I seen Wyall, and taken a grip on her she felt a rib was cracking. I let go, and she broke into a run for the chute. That quick I have pulled together, and I'm at the wreck of big stuff before she is.

I have just heaved a couple mine timbers to one side, when some cross-hauled bridge stock lifts and rolls apart, and Big Anton ploughed out from under the deck, hauling Rick Powell after him. Both are splashed with dock mud, and it's a drip of blood from Rick's right jaw. He sways in a kind of daze till he savvies Celia is necking him.

Rick comes alive and his eyes catched on Lewis Wyall. His look is all steel gray now. He speaks in his quiet-like way, but hard.

"All I asked for was work," he says. "Any kind. You've given me a fight. And now—I' fighting mad. You thought it would be a one-way fight, Lewis. It's not. I'm a loser, but you are a quitter. That makes us even. Do your damndest, but we are handling this chute."

Wyall don't seem to hear him. The chief is froze, his face white and eyes cold like snow and ice, while he's looking at Celia McCarren hang on Rick Powell's neck. He don't know they been meeting up any, but I do, for last night

my missus was in on it. But now he sees enough.

He taken it. I mean, he don't make any kind of comeback to Rick's fighting talk, and when he moves it is to snap around and line out through the ram for the office with his authority.

Rick has untangled himself from Celia. He says to her gentle, "This don't do us any good. You oughtn't to come out here, but I'm proud you did. Good-by, good luck, and if I'm not always a loser—sometime—but now I got to do my work."

He wheeled around at that, batted at his smeared-up face in that way of his, and he ties into that wreck of timbers, with more coming like thunder down the skids. Big Anton, Yanko and Pete are with him, like wild men. Rick has taken a chance on being smashed to a pulp to save Big Anton from the same. And I savvy again that hunks is not just workstock but they are men like anybody on a fighting showdown.

Rick, all mucked and bloodied up, is yelling into the worst tangle and jam of timber I ever seen, and now I find I'm tracking Big Anton in to help them. I know it's off the lineout of my job, and Wyall can ax me for it, but I'm so hot I don't give a damn.

But Rick has his head.

"Beat it, Gabby," he says. "We have this job to handle, and you have yours. We'll have the chute clean for the start tomorrow, if we have to work overtime till midnight to do it."

I PULLED together, backed out, and struck off on my proper rounds. When I get to the dock side, the mid-week supply and ferry launch is leaving the landing for the coast, and Celia McCarren is on it. Les Hopper tells me she has quit, and it looks to me like a runout on Rick. I remember how he told her good-by. But a runout ain't like Celia. All my missus knows, though, is she has gone home to her folks in San Francisco. And that's all Rick knows at the time, as it turned out.

Well, anyhow, all anybody in Sooner can bother or talk about next couple of days is that timber fight. Don't fool yourself that Wyall could end it any time with his authority. He knowed he couldn't, and not jam up his own job. There is no work law more solid than the one that protects a man who does a job according to its lineout, even against a boss who hates his guts.

It was Wyall's right to route the heavy part of the cut to the timber chute, and to fire the chuters if they could not handle it. That was the lineout, but let him overstep it, and there'd be trouble. Even the men he brung with him stood by that job law. Big Anton had the Bulgarians on fire. And Wyall was responsible to the Great Western main office.

That Wednesday night the chuters worked three and a half hours of overtime to clear the deck. Next day they were tired men, especially Yanko and Pete, even before they started to work, But Big Anton drove the short-siders to it, and him and Rick was still themselves and a man and a half to boot.

Rick had rigged up a bumper away out on the long side, to keep them hundred-footers even when they tear down the skids. But at noon it was another jam, and overtime to clean up. And that night they had to drag out and mule for a couple hours more to clear the deck. The damn' timber-coast winter was still doing its worst. Cold blowing rain, and lights out. Wyall had ordered the dock lamps switched off. The chuters had to spot their work with lanterns.

Friday morning I don't see how human flesh and blood can stand another eight hours of such a grind, when they're already so wore down. And now Wyall puts on the pressure for a finish. All day the timber cut is stepped up. Noon-hour the chuters don't half get the jam cleaned up. I ain't the heart to look at the fight till nigh to quitting time that

afternoon, and then it looks like a finish for the chuters. There is such a mountain jam on the banking deck that at the rear it is piled three quarters up the skids to the line of rollers on the trestle top. Once the jam has built up to the rolls, then the timber cut will be stalled, and Wyall is in the clear to kick out the chute crew, for they ain't handled their job.

Rick Powell and Big Anton are ploughing and plunging into that jam, though they go at it like they got the blind staggers and heaves. Yanko and Pete are simply worked out, and are riding the timbers more than shoving them on the push to the transfer truck.

It looks so damn' hopeless I am sick. Rick Powell is a loser again, there's no getting away from it, and he is bound to know it by now as well as I do. But he is still fighting. And so is Big Anton Stovarich. He dogs after Rick in a way that says he'll follow up as long as he's got anything to follow with, as long as Rick keeps going. And Rick keeps going.

He does, though he knows he's losing, the timbers thundering on, the jam building higher and higher up the skids. And finally he taken a one in a hundred chance to lower the jam before the rolls is stalled. It's that chance, or the finish, him the loser, right now.

What he does is mount the banking deck with his peavey, prize out timbers, and roll them on. With every prize, the jammed timbers that bulge up nigh to twenty feet above him on the skid slopes, are loosened and they drive and roll. Rick has to leap and ride them like he was working logs in rough water.

He had him a new pair of caulk boots by now, but just the same it was the toughest birling, the most hair-raising, I ever seen, and I been around. Logs are simple for boot work, compared to timbers with corners on 'em.

But Rick broke them out, bobcatted up them when they rolled, time after time, and he held that clearance between the top of the jam until the quitting whistle boomed through the rainy twilight. Then he jumped to the dock. He went to his knees and come up staggering. Big Anton set down on one them government squares, blowing like a whale. On the short side Pete and Yanko caves in. I mean, the poor hunks sagged over a piece of bridge stock on the transfer truck, and they are in a fit of the weak trembles, and damn' if they don't bust out crying. They've won another day, but they know it's no use.

That's how they are when the big saws whine out in whispers, and Lewis Wyall and the mill push come out, the mill crew straggling after them in the rainy weather.

Same as always, the manager swings by in his fancy rig like he was Mr. Big hisself with bells on. He ain't even given the chuters a glance. He packs the auority, he is a winner, and Rick Powell is a loser and a bum. By now nobody in the outfit would bet a nickel to a dollar that the chuters will even try again tomorrow.

THE mill men ain't kidding the chuters tonight, as they have been, and I don't hear any arguments about the timber fight as they straggle past. Rick stiffened up to face 'em, shook his shoulders straight in his new mackinaw, and gives all the hard eye, but he ain't feeling it. He sees Big Anton hunkered down like a sick bear, and he's sees Yanko and Pete crying, and I can tell when he goes to talking to Anton he's saying uncle. Big Anton shakes his head and growls some, but finally he gives a big shrug of his shoulders, and he is saying what Rick is.

"I've no right to ask them to kill theirselves on my account," Rick tells me. "Or to let them and you lose your jobs. I'll square you all with Wyall when I inform him I'm quitting. Quitting," he says. "The first time."

I was relieved, but somehow ashamed. I never felt so gloomed up in all my

days as while I was slogging down the waterfront street to my shack. I drug into the house, and there sets Celia.

You could bolt me over with a feather. My legs buckled, and I plopped down in the nighest rocker, and all is in a whirl. Through it I hear Celia talking, and what she says I'm not only soon setting up and taking notice bug-eyed, but when she's done I don't even wait for a bite of supper before I lam out to prowl down Rick Powell.

It's lucky I'm so previous, for I catch him on the street, right at the gate to the manager's house. He shakes me off.

"I'm going to give Wyall his needings," he says, in that quiet but hard way of his.

I am smart enough to say quick, "Celia McCarren is back," as he shoves by. He stopped limp, like I hit him with a ax. A light shone down from Wyall's windows, and Rick's dogged eyes seemed to catch a fire from it. That way of his, he batted up a fist at the rain that blowed between us. I talks on fast. "Celia left here to see J. J. Regan, who is still the main owner of Sooner Bay, even if he's retired. Celia's dad used to be his super here. Regan fixed it she was to have a job here when he sold a interest and turned the management over to Great Western."

"I know that much," he sort of breathes in. "She told me—where is she now?" he says hard, coming out of it.

"She's to my shack," I says. "She been on the go ever since she left, by boat and coast-highway bus. Plenty fagged out, but she says whatever you want her to do, she'll do. What she got in San Francisco is a letter from Regan to Wyall which orders you are to have a even break, a fair chance. Just that. She told Regan it was all you ask for."

Rick swore in a way I think the rain has blowed down his neck and choked him. Then he mutters, "This hasn't happened to me—it couldn't—" And he bats a fist at his eyes again.

I let him alone for a minute and thought of what had put him on the skids. Celia and old Regan had looked up the records on Rick in the operators' blacklist. Rick's trouble at Tumwater was due to a fire which broke out in the Number 1 unit, the old mill, of the Amalgamated's plant there. Same time there was labor troubles, account of the bad times. After the burnout of the old mill, three of the worst trouble-makers was jailed and held for a arson trial. But Rick wouldn't stand for it. He swore the fire started from a condemned boiler, and the facts backed him. He even took his own money to hire lawyers for the men in jail. They come free, but the Amalgamated has lost forty thousand insurance, and makes a bum of him. And it's all account he believes God Almighty hates a liar.

"All right, Gabby," he says at last. "Tell Celia I want her to hold off with that letter of Regan's till I make one more stab at beating Wyall in this fight he started. I mean us—us Bulgarians." He grins in the rainy light. "I'll go now to prod Big Anton, Yanko and Pete out for a cleanup, and a clear start in the morning. I've a hunch Wyatt will be panicked. I'm gambling he's a quitter."

I don't dream yet what a big stake Rick has decided to gamble for.

WELL, Rick is set for the showdown next morning. The hunks has followed him out for the cleanup last night, and they are with him now. And Rick has guessed Wyall right about him being panicked. At the starting whistle he thrown all his authority to finish off the chuters, and he thrown it foul. I watched the start with Celia from the shelter of a lumber stack.

What happens is the mill push holds up one them government hundred-footers on the cutoff table in the mill, until there is a pile of smaller timbers behind it; then he guns the works out in a giant wad. It's that same foul play, over and over. I mean, foul. The chuters don't

have a chance. Every slather naturally comes off the rolls and down the skids all crosshauled, and in no time the pile-up on the deck is like a monster box of matches has been turnt upside down and dumped out. Nine timbers out of ten was bound in solid.

All the chuters can do is mule out the one of the ten and see the others build up into a monster jam. We watch that for maybe half a hour, and still Rick just keeps working. But it taken all the heart out of the hunks, as it done me only to see it. Then Yanko and Pete dogged it, just set down and quit. And it wasn't many more minutes till Big Anton blowed up. He pulled off his mulehide mittens and belt-leather apron and thrown them to hell-and-gone. This trip Rick don't try to talk him out of it. Rick sees Lewis Wyall striding down from the mill to swing his authority.

Like he done last night, Rick taken his peavey, and he bobcatted up that terrible tangled mountain of timbers, and he pries and rolls the loose ones from the peak. They skid and thunder down to the deck, him leaping and birling them, somehow keeping his feet, somehow hopping and riding the big stuff that rushes down on him in piles from the rolls above.

Loose timbers on the deck, and nobody at them. Only Rick Powell, fighting on the top. Big Anton stood off, sort of lifting one foot and then the other, like he was a worried elephant. Then all of a sudden he let out a horrible howl, he grabbed up his belt and mittens and faunched over to Yanko and Pete, and he booted and batted them up to their feet—and the next thing they was four crazy damn' fools tieing into that timber fight again, instead of one of them!

Lewis Wyall hauls up nigh the chute, and stares like he don't know what to do. Rick skids down from the jam, and the four mule up a load on a truck. While they work Wyall is sort of shrinking back, like somebody has a gun on him. A fight like them men is making is something he ain't built to understand. It scares him. He is afraid of his job. He is beating himself.

That's how I figure him later. Now I can't figure anything. I don't hardly breathe. I only see them four fighting fools staggering that truck back again for another load, and think how can they keep going. I see Rick's eyes glinting at Lewis Wyall, hammering him. As the chuters spread to the two sides of the deck Rick is talking hard to Yanko. Then they mule to work again.

One them government squares hit the top of the jam, with small timbers ramming after it. The monster stick tilted on the peak, then crashed on down the face of the jam. I yelled, and I hears a hoarse scream from Wyall, and then the chuters are diving under the deck. Only three come up. Yanko stays down. Rick mounted the hundred-footer and ran over to the short side. Then him and Pete half-carry Yanko out.

Wyall started for 'em, but he stopped, his knees shaking, when Big Anton bellered up to him like a gorilla, pawing the air and showing his teeth. Rick swung between Anton and the manager. He faced Wyall. He talked, and his voice wasn't quiet now, but it has a ripsaw edge to it.

"You balled up our work to beat us!" he rasped. "But we're not beat, so long as there are four of us. Yanko is out of it, and you'll pay off for that! Now, by God! Get over to his place and work it! We rate four men. You are the fourth. Hear me?"

Wyall was panicked. He was scared witless, or he never have done it. All he's got to do to save his face and his authority is to order a change in the mill-cut and me to put on another fourth man. And then all he's got to do to beat the chuters is to keep the cut on them like he has till he loses his head this morning. But he is a quitter. And he lets Rick and Big Anton push him around and over to the short side and make him mule timbers with Pete, while

all the outfits seeing him made a fool of or hearing of it.

For Yanko wasn't hurt. He'd played he was at Rick's order, at his first chance to make it look good. All of it was a play, the gamble that Rick has swore to make, and which he is sure he can win when he sees Wyall caving in from the hell he's turned loose this morning.

Wyall is some minutes getting next to himself. When he does he is shouldering under the short side of that hundred-footer, with Rick giving him the "Heave-ho!" from the long side, and about forty of his men laughing at him. It hit Wyall he was muling on that timber alone. He straightened up, and there they were, men looking out the mill windows, from the sorting table, from the yard, laughing. Even Yanko was laughing at him. And you could hear Big Anton for a mile.

Wyall was done in Sooner Bay. He was still the manager, but he don't pack any more authority. Three hunks and a hobo timber-worker have made a fool of him, and beat him on a workout. It will be a fair cut on the chute now.

I know it, and Celia McCarren knows it, and about a week later Wyall knows it beyond any doubt. That was when J. J. Regan swung his weight with the Great Western to make Rick Powell a super again. And one the biggest counts with J. J. Regan was Rick taken Wyall under his own power, and never using that letter Celia brung him.

But all this was to come. All we knowed now was Wyall was licked and Rick and the hunks had win their jobs. And all Rick seemed to know, when Wyall slunk off for the office, was his job to do.

"Come on," he says to Big Anton. "We got to get at our work."

The hunks was still laughing. It must be fun to be a Bulgarian.

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Once more that murderous gun thundered.

THE GOLDEN FLEECE

by

Paul Randell Morrison

THE first time I ever saw him, he was sitting on one leg atop his clay-colored horse, Mud, shooting tomato cans that one of the Bar V cowpokes was pitching up in the air. And hitting them every time, with that ancient old .44 six-gun of his, notwithstanding that Mud was somewhat fidgety and that the fellow's lazy, lolling position astride his old brier-scratched saddle made any kind of shooting difficult.

Lazy? That's what he was, and he bragged about it. Said it took a lazy man to think. Someday, he informed anybody who would listen, he'd have an idea that would bring him a herd of money. So far as I could find out from the rest of the grinning hands, he'd never had an idea yet that had brought him more than the bummed makings for a cigarette. His name was Hitchcock or Hotchkiss or something, but nobody on the Bar V ever called him anything except Sleepy. I doubt if anybody back on that spread knows his real name even to this day.

I'm not saying he wasn't called a lot of other names out in those sun-blasted sand hills where I saw him next. That was almost a year to a day after I'd passed by the Bar V on my way to make a geologic survey for oil in this country forsaken of vegetation and God. He was sitting sidewise just like I'd seen him before, and Mud was half asleep, head

down, standing on three legs. The same old .44 was stuck in a holster worn through in several places.

"Howdy, Sleepy!" I greeted. "How's things com—"

I didn't get any further. About a half dozen drillers and mud-smellers cut loose with a howl to high heaven. One of them hugged his stomach and spun round and round like a Hopi Indian caressing a couple of live rattlesnakes. He roared until his face was red.

"Here we've been trying to name 'im for months!" he squealed. "And you come along and hang a handle on him that fits like a male thread into a female union!"

A mud man by the name of O'Higgins jerked off his dirty, sloppy hat and shouted, "Three cheers for Sleepy!" And that tough, chesty crew gave off three of the rottenest Bronx cheers I ever heard.

"Didn't intend to let that name out, Dellwyn," Sleepy upbraided me, rolling his enormous gray eyes in my direction, and I was pretty much embarrassed. He was so gentle about everything. I never saw him angry. If he ever boiled up inside, he never showed it.

"Sorry," I apologized, and glared about at his tormentors. One by one they went back to their work, and Sleepy informed me that since winter had set in, the passes were blocked with snow, and the only means of transportation was by pack train. That was his job, at so much the hundred pounds. His price was reasonable, and he was doing a good business. Already had a string of twelve pack mules.

I noticed that the crew was examining one of the big bits that had just been hauled up. The blacksmith was cursing with every breath. He blamed all but himself for the condition of the bit. He stopped raving long enough to call me over to look at it, and never before or since have I seen a bit in such a battered condition. It apeared as if some giant beast had chewed the tool, but couldn't quite swallow it.

"Hmm," I said, not wanting to get mixed up in one of these crew fights. They can go from words in an instant to monkey wrenches, stillsons, and lengths of two-inch pipe. There wasn't a man in the crew that hadn't banged over the oil fields for ten or fifteen years. They were hard and all Irish. I glanced around at them as they glowered at the chewed bit. There was O'Higgins, O'Leary, Burke—the foreman—and McBreen. I saw that Sleepy had edged Mud up and was staring thoughtfully at the practically useless tool. He had his barn door of a sombrero off and was running his fingers through his thick mop of black hair.

"I've got an idea, boys," he began but O'Leary snorted and Foreman Burke let out a weird Gaelic oath. Sleepy carefully crushed his big hat and put it back on his head, the crush promptly going out as the crown filled with that huge brush of hair. You could always tell when Sleepy had had a haircut by looking to see if the crush was in his sombrero. He got his hair mowed only on national holidays, and it was now several weeks till Christmas. He clucked to Mud and rode over to the dugout he'd talked the boys into building for his pack animals. I sauntered across to the Golden Oil Company's hole, about a hundred yards away.

"WELL, boys," I announced myself to our bitterest rivals, "how's she going?"

"He ain't!" snapped Oslo Thorvik, the huge Swede in charge of the Golden's well, and pulled out his under lip to load it with snooze. One glance at his cordy-muscled crew—they were all Swedes—told me that anybody who said a Swede didn't have any expression on his face was a liar. That was the sickest, most disheartened bunch of Scandinavians I've ever seen. Those big, rough fellows were almost in tears. The

reason lay on the ground at my feet—the bit.

"Thorvik been chewing on it?" I asked, but that wasn't funny, and none of them even smiled, let alone laughed. "Bad shape," I went on. "Looks like it was made of soft lead."

I saw I wasn't welcome, so, some puzzled, I ambled on back to my own outfit, the West Continental. I'd been the first geologist into the section and had staked a thirty-year reputation on the exact spot for a wildcat, but this snooping Golden Oil bribed some of the Bar V boys to follow me while I was using the Bar V as headquarters during survey. Result: dirty lease work at the crossroads and this hole just over the line of our backyard. It wasn't the Swedes' fault; they were only carrying out orders and drawing their pay.

"Burke," I said to the foreman, "how long has this been going on?"

"About three days," he snarled.

"Bit always comes out battered?"

"Always."

"Any headway?"

"Hell, no! Inch a day. Maybe less."

"Well," I advised, "it's not my job, but if I were you I'd try to get an idea of some sort before the Old Man gets here tomorrow."

He groaned first, then cursed. O'Leary butted in sarcastically, "Maybe we ought to sing Sleepy a lullaby till he dreams up that idea he's always going to hatch and be rich?"

"Maybe," I agreed, and strolled up to the bunkhouse, where I went straight to bed. I'd been in the saddle since noon the day before, and I was some tired.

I MUST have slept as solid as a chunk of granite, for it was long after sunup before I was awakened by angry voices. When I reached the hole, I found Thorvik violently accusing Burke of putting some chemical in the Golden's hardening powder, used by their blacksmith as part of his bit tempering process. Burke, red as a newly boiled beet, was just as violently accusing Thorvik of the same underhanded procedure. There was fierce rivalry, none too gentlemanly, between the two crews, for our Old Man had offered a handsome bonus if we beat the Golden and got the oil coming our way first.

That started things for keeps. The Golden's powers-that-be retaliated with a bonus that made Thorvik's Swedes' eyeballs tinkle. The big bits sank to the three-thousand foot level like a cow through quicksand. There we slowed down through an unexpected hard formation, but shortly took another spurt. Then, contrary to all geologic knowledge, the bits struck something that turned their sharp, well tempered edges as if they were lead.

Being known as an expert geologist who'd uncovered a couple of billion dollars' worth of crude for my company, I felt that it was my cue to keep my mouth shut until I knew what kind of formation those bits had hit. I knew every lasting one of those big toughs were waiting for me to speak. They were never so happy as when they picked "Old Dellwyn" up on some boner. Once I swore we'd bring in a three thousand barrel gusher at the two thousand foot level. We brought in salt water at eight thousand. I was young and tender then.

Now, rocks just don't exist, Cenozoic down to Archeozoic, that one of our modern bits can't pound through. Yet, right before my eyes, I had all too painful evidence that the black depths of that hole hid something that gnawed our bits to shreds. Igneous, sedimentary, what-not—I knew that they'd give way, in the end, all alike. The hole would go through.

For a time I even toyed with the idea that we'd struck a monster formation of solid diamond, and got giddy thinking out the various ramifications of such a fantastic find. I played around with the

idea Thorvik had about dirty work being done in the blacksmith shops. Either side would do it, too, if they had thought of it and had the chance.

"How much," asked Sleepy, moseying up atop Mud, "are these wells estimated to cost?"

Burke shot him a stony glance, and O'Higgins grunted. Nobody answered him, and I'll confess that the question did seem entirely out of place. Why bring up memories of money sunk in abandoned wells? That's what we were all thinking, anyhow, no matter if we weren't saying it.

"Three hundred thousand?" Sleepy persisted.

"Two-fifty," I replied absently.

"Then it wouldn't be unreasonable if I took a thousand bucks off each of your companies to tell you what's wrong?"

Heads jerked up from their funeral pose over the dead bit, and there wasn't a sunburned, oil-soaked face that didn't show defiance. If ever I saw jealousy of a tenderfoot, an outsider, flare into murder and mayhem, I sure saw it right there. But Sleepy didn't resent their antagonism; he merely bent over until his heavily stubbled chin rested in the cupped palm of his right arm, the elbow of which reposed upon the saddle horn.

Burke rolled a lopsided cigarette in a brown paper—we hadn't gotten any gas yet, so smoking at the well was still permitted. I noticed that his hand shook when he slid his tongue along the paper to seal the smoke. That's what anger will do to a man. Thorvik spat a ghastly charge of snooze at Burke's battered bit head, and our blacksmith, McBreen, glared at him with manslaughter in his eyes. McBreen would have to work on that bit.

"Well," Sleepy reminded us, "my offer still stands when you get ready to do business."

He sat back in his saddle and rode off, much as one would sit in a rocking chair, or as an indolent Indian potentate would perch upon his favorite elephant. I wanted to laugh, but it just wasn't the thing to do.

WELL, we thought and investigated, and, for the first time since they met, the two crews got as chummy as tough meat like that can ever get. They even got so that they grunted at each other instead of growling. The day passed; the morning belched up a red-hot sun. At noon not only our Old Man, J. A. R. Ainswood, showed up, saddle scalded and in a humor to breathe fire through his long beak nose. His sharp little black eyes seemed to dance all over his face, and his blistered jowls shaded off into purple when we showed him the bits and told him what had happened.

"I'll give the whole blank-blanked parcel of you till sundown to do something!" he rasped out, and headed for the shade of the bunkhouse, demanding the whereabouts of our balms and ointments.

He had scarcely gone when in blew a couple of Bar V boys, steering a miserable wretch on a petered nag. This fellow was not more than five feet five, bald as an eagle, and gold-toothed all on one side of his jaws. His pale blue eyes were watering, and the lids were swollen and red. He climbed painfully off his jaded mount and straddled along over to where Thorvik was nervously dipping his tongue down between his under lip and lower teeth to the snuff formation.

"You big baboon!" he shrieked. "Why isn't that drill going?"

That was the first time I'd ever seen B. Boswick, president of the Golden Oil Company. I thought our Old Man was hard, but he compared as an infant at Sunday school to that high-powered package of nitroglycerine called B. Boswick. Well, sir, big Thorvik jumped like he was stung by a bull-nettle, and in three seconds the whole Golden Oil crew was back on their own property. I

turned away to keep from hearing those lumbering Swedes take all that hissing and spitting and poisonous cursing.

Eventually even a hurricane exhausts its strength, and about sundown both crews, their foreman, and their moguls gathered disconsolately at our well. We looked very much like hungry, discouraged buzzards hovering about an already clean-picked carcass. That was when Sleepy rode up.

"For the love of hell and brimstone," Burke boiled over, "don't you ever walk!"

"Nope," Sleepy drawled, and after a while, as if he had been pondering the subject: "Not if I can help it."

Which was the unvarnished truth. He had ridden so much of his life away that his legs had grown unused to supporting his weight, and they squashed down like wagon-seat springs when he walked. You could drive a jackass between them.

"Ready to take up my offer?" he asked, ignoring the fact that right there with us were two of the biggest financiers of the West. They didn't embarrass him in the least. Three or four of the men groaned, painfully loud and suggestive.

"What offer?" snapped B. Boswick, jackknifing to his feet.

"Some idea about these bits?" J. A. R. asked, unfolding his squatted length into the atmosphere.

Sleepy repeated his proposition. Only now he had gone up a thousand dollars in each direction. He wanted two thousand dollars off each company to tell them exactly what was wrong.

"Absurd!" B. Boswick shrieked.

"Ridiculous!" roared J. A. R. Ainswood.

Sleepy clucked to Mud, and Mud opened his eyes just enough to see where he was going and padded off through the dust. Boswick shrugged his little shoulders.

"Come back here!" Ainswood thundered. "We'll pay it!"

Sleepy tightened in on a rein, and Mud took a quarter acre turn, coming up on the other side of the battered bit.

"Write your checks," he requested, peering as solemn as an owl from those big gray eyes of his. "Just make 'em out to 'Cash.' "

There was a bit more quibbling then, and Boswick wanted to know how in the devil he could be certain that Sleepy would live up to his agreement. J. A. R. seconded the motion. Sleepy just looked at them, owl-like and hurt, and Boswick shook his shoulders uncomfortably. He wrote out the check. J. A. R. followed suit, muttering to himself.

"BOYS," Sleepy began, and men rose up all around him, from where they sat on their heels. It was funny the way he included both moguls in that "Boys." He shifted his weight, so that the toe nearest to us came out of the stirrup and clanked idly at the heavy wood of which the stirrup was made.

"Boys," he went on in a more or less bored fashion, "haven't you noticed that both of them wells got off to a slanting start, when they was about a hundred feet down? I heard the Swedes complaining about that a way back, and Burke cussed some about the same thing a couple of weeks ago."

He paused, finished rolling a cigarette. He started to raise his heel to strike the match, but the effort was too much. He let the smoke go, holding the cigarette in one hand and the match in the other.

"Go on!" Boswick snapped testily.

"Can't you see yet?" Sleepy asked, as if to say: "Damn, you're dumb!" And that coming from him was gall in the sweetbread.

"If you've tricked me, I warn you, by thunder—" But J. A. R. got no further.

"Oh, well," Sleepy yawned, "it's just that your bits went down at a slant towards each other till they struck themselves."

"Hell's bells!" boomed J. A. R.

"Impossible!" B. Boswick shrilled like a donkey engine whistle. "And we pay you four thousand dollars for that! I'll have you know you can't—"

"Wait!" J. A. R. caught him by the arm.

The crews had slunk off like whipped hounds. The thing was possible. I knew it. A bit traveling down several thousand feet could get so deflected that it would go a half mile off the plumb.

It didn't take long to find out. Burke was already hoisting a freshly blacksmithed bit into our hole, and Thorvik rushed across to do the same. When Burke struck bottom he let the bit lie, and Thorvik dropped his big bit down the Golden Oil hole. Just once. Then both bits were pulled. Sure enough, Burke's bit had a huge dent in it that had not been there before it went down.

Just to make sure that this was the cause of the trouble, Thorvik sent down his bit, and Burke dropped a ton of West Continental gouger on top of it. When Thorvik's bit came out, there was Burke's vicious dent. The bit had skidded after striking and had reamed out a two inch trail that was a quarter inch deep. Thorvik cursed in Swedish.

Sleepy carefully folded his checks and opened a sweat-stained cowhide poke. He placed the checks inside and methodically pulled the drawstrings tight, giving both of them a half-hitch around the mouth. As he bumped Mud in the ribs and rocked off, he stuffed the poke in an inside vest pocket.

"What next?" Burke asked, and every one of us knew what the other was thinking.

"COME over here, boys," J. A. R. mumbled to his crew, and as I trailed along toward our hole, I decided I didn't like the quiet way he said it. When we were out of earshot, he whispered. "Run for it, boys! Get that bit down there first!"

But Boswick beat him to it. The instant our crew started to run, he ordered Thorvik to sink their bit. A shout went up from the Golden as the heavy tool began to gouge into the rock. And about that time, Burke's bit smashed down on top. Thorvik's cable twanged, and the engines stopped.

The silence that followed was terrible. We stood sort of paralyzed, glaring across at each other. Nobody moved.

Boswick started to curse. J. A. R. took it up. Then Boswick called the Old Man a fancy name. It didn't fit, and it didn't take. J. A. R. started on the gallop across that dust-soup backyard of ours, and Burke, grabbing up a Stillson wrench, took in after him. I let out a warning, but nobody paid any attention to me.

Boswick stumbled and scooped up a tub of dust with his collar and mouth, but big Thorvik walked right on over top of him, a yard of pick handle in his hand. I had a single, sane glimpse of those angry, cursing battle lines coming together before I got mad and charged in with a two foot length of trace chain.

Dust. Curses. Threats. Lunging bodies. Groans. Blows. It was an awful mess. O'Leary got in Thorvik's way and that giant Scandinavian picked him up in one hand and slung him over his shoulder. About that time I connected with another hulk, but the chain I wrapped around his neck only made him mad. He put his big hand in my face, and I went down on my back. He stepped in my face as he lumbered on.

That's when the first shot rang out. I tell you it was horrible to hear. Lead slugs tearing around in a stewing mess like that. Plain murder. The gun thundered again. I couldn't see a thing on account of the boiling dust. Dim, fighting men were cursing each other and stamping all around me.

"Wham!" the gun exploded again.

I crawled free of that forest of legs.

"Wham!" It sounded louder than a cannon.

I rubbed violently at my dust-filled eyes, and as I got control of my sight a horse stepped slowly over me and stopped a few yards away right smack in the middle of the melee. Once more that murderous gun thundered. Then, as if with a single mind, the men quit fighting.

They drew off in their respective groups. All except Burke. He was a raving, fighting maniac at that moment, blood running down one side of his head, and his nose all out of kilter. With the big Stillson swinging dangerously, he rushed at Thorvik. Again the heavy gun boomed, and Burke's wrench flew out of his hand. He stopped, dead still, staring at the wrench, now lying a few feet away in the dust.

We all looked a little sheepish, and silently withdrew to our own outfits. Sleepy put away his smoking gun without even taking time to reload it. Mud shifted his weight onto three legs, let his head droop, and promptly went to sleep.

We checked up and found that each of those shots had disarmed a man, and not one man had been injured.

THERE was much palaver after that. Somebody had to yield, and that was a cinch, or wasn't, whichever way one looked at it. But who? That's what J. A. R. asked Boswick and what Boswick asked J. A. R.—with verbal embellishment.

They tried buying out each other's rights, and came a rodeo cropper on that. Neither would sell for a reasonable price. They threatened legal action, but, in the end, neither wanted to waste money on courts and vulturous lawyers. They were still arguing when up rode Sleepy, just in time to hear Boswick spurt out that if it weren't for the money he'd already spent on the lease, he'd take down the infernal rig and get out. He'd never believed there was any oil there anyhow, just a fool gamble. He was, he informed the world, sick and tired of the whole mess. I caught J. A. R.'s eye and nodded. I had faith in that spot.

"How much," J. A. R. asked casually, coming right back to the same question they'd each asked the other a dozen times before, "will you take for your lease rights?"

"Five thousand dollars!" the exasperated Boswick let out.

And J. A. R. cursed him roundly. Boswick had paid only about fifteen hundred. If it had been anybody else besides B. Boswick, I know blamed well that the Old Man would have paid five times that much, maybe more.

"Boys," Sleepy butted into the flow of super-heated words, "I'd like to ask if the Golden Oil Company's lease covers all minerals, such as coal, gold, silver, copper, and—"

"It does," Boswick clipped off shortly.

"Sure about the gold?" Sleepy urged, round eyed.

"Yes," Boswick popped, and the eloquent shrug of his thin shoulders told us that he knew as well as any of us that there was no gold within two hundred miles of the place.

"What's the least you'll take for that lease?" asked Sleepy.

"You heard me!" Boswick almost screamed. "Five thou—" He stopped, his lips set down around the Turkish cigarette he was smoking. The smoke curled up into his pale blue watery eyes. He studied Sleepy more than a minute. Finally he said, "Four thousand dollars."

"Sold," drawled Sleepy, and right then and there, on the back of a piece of heavy wrapping paper, they drew up an agreement, ignoring J. A. R.'s high-powered vocabulary. Sleepy stretched the paper over his saddle horn and signed. His large eyes were very solemn when he handed down Boswick's own

check and the one garnered off the great J. A. R. Ainswood.

Within the week, the Golden had its rig out of the country.

SEVERAL weeks passed, but we saw no more of Sleepy. It appeared as if he had skipped the county. We all felt kind of sorry for him. He'd been mighty handy and fair and—well, no matter how tough one was, one just had to like him.

A month went by.

Then, early one morning we awoke to find a tent pitched on the spot where the Golden had had their rig and Sleepy going over Mud with a currycomb. To save driving a stake, he had placed one corner of the tent around the three feet of casing that stuck up out of the old Golden hole. Burke had put a cap on the casing after the Golden crew pulled out, and the improvised tent stake was as solid as Mother Earth herself. Leave it to Sleepy to avoid unnecessary work!

We tried to get Sleepy to contract our freighting needs, but he was sorry, had other business. The West Continental's well went down like greased lightning. Late one afternoon, we knew we had struck pay sand. We got ready for action. We would bring her in the next morning.

That night Sleepy rode leisurely off to the east. But before we were ready to spud in the next morning, he returned, with two men following in a wagon. The three of them lifted a large box from the wagon and carried it inside the tent, where they hammered around for a time and came out. The two men drove away. We were puzzled, but entirely too busy to pay much attention.

A few hours later we brought in one of the biggest gushers I've ever seen. Sleepy, watching with the rest of us, noticed the wind change and the monster fountain of oil spray gradually shift toward his tent. He nudged Mud and rode slowly over to get his belongings out of the way.

Several of us saw that if his stuff didn't get moved in hurry, it would be soaked, and we ran across to help him, knowing full well he'd never save a thing at the speed he was moving. I didn't pay any attention to anything except Sleepy's belongings, not until a torrent of Irish curses trooped out of Burke's mouth. Every man of us hesitated, looked. Then, as one, we dropped Sleepy's household effects in the dust. Instead of a cap over the casing of the Golden's abandoned hole, there was a brand new, latest type, head control valve. All one had to do was to screw on the end of a pipe line, open the valve, and start oil to flowing to the nearest refinery. At the rate of some fifteen hundred dollars a day.

"You double-crossing—" Burke turned on Sleepy, but his words stuck in his throat.

Sleepy had not bothered to get off his horse while we moved his stuff for him, and there he lounged, owl-eyed and as innocent as ever. But one thing I noticed, and so did Burke, was that Sleepy's right thumb was stuck in his belt so close to that ancient .44 of his that all four fingers caressed its butt.

The big valve was not quite closed, and the slight fry of escaping gas and oil drew my attention. When I looked around again, all except Sleepy had gone.

"You know," he drawled, easing the crook of his leg around the saddle horn, "I almost made a mistake. I thought some of swinging the deal the other way and getting the West Continental hole."

"Why didn't you?" I asked tartly, galled at his nerve.

"Well, you see, I figured the most oil would come from the Golden hole, account of it being the straightest up and down—more pressure required the other way."

And, as events proved out, he was right.

It was him or me.

CHILKOOT SLIDE

As Told To Orris M. Kellar

by F. B. Holbrook

I JOINED the Klondyke gold rush in 1898. I am one of the men who climbed out of the Chilkoot slide, when sixty-nine men lost their lives.

To understand my story you must know something of the men and the conditions under which they lived and labored. Fifty thousand men disembarked at Dyea. Those men were gathered from the farm, the shop, the office, the saloon, the gambling hall, the parlor, and even from the church. Only a very few were hardened to the work of the trail.

It was thirteen miles from Dyea to the top of Chilkoot Pass, and the pass

was two miles above sea level at Dyea. The majority of these men had to transport their food and equipment, a half ton or more, by means of packsacks. Leaving Dyea, a man would carry all he could, as far as he could, drop his load beside the trail and stumble back to camp, to repeat the trip next day.

In this way the trail became lined with goods from Dyea to the top of the pass. Many of the men turned back to the States, leaving their goods lying beside the trail, before they were half way through Box Canyon. Others went on until they faced that last eighteen hundred feet too steep a climb for dog or horse, and they turned back from there. Those who did reach the foot of Chilkoot, and set up their camp there, were bordering on a state of collapse.

These were the general conditions.

The last days of March were warm and bright. The snow melted a little; then a sudden drop in temperature froze a crust on the snow. But while we were enjoying those bright days a great cyclone was forming over the interior of Alaska. The wind from the north swept through the pass and tried to flow down the canyon. A warm wind off the Japan current came up through the canyon and the two winds met. The cold winds of the North tried to reach the level of the sea; the warm wind tried to break through the cold and find the lighter strata above.

It was a war of the winds. Words have not been coined that will convey the wildness, the savage, violent ferocity with which those two currents grappled, swirled and fought there. They would hurl each other against the sides of Box Canyon with a noise like thunder.

The cold wind won the fight and the temperature dropped far below the freezing point. Then came the snow.

On the thirty-first of March the great blizzard burst upon us. Whirling, spiraling—not the soft, downy flakes which the schoolboy loves, but fine bits like sharp, cutting sand. But filling the air with snow did not still the roaring of the winds. That thundering voice of the storm roared on. Everywhere men remained hidden. They forgot that they were trying to pass each other and be the first man in the gold field.

For more than a hundred hours the snow swept down from the North. On the second of April the new fallen snow began sliding. Two tents at the foot of the pass were buried and their occupants had to be dug out. Men began to talk of danger. Nerves which had been only taut before grew tense, and some of them snapped. For three days and nights of storm and gloom we huddled together and talked of danger.

BY THE third of April fear drove us down the trail. So that none might be lost in the storm, a long rope was found, and nearly a hundred men grasped it as we started down the canyon to safety.

A half mile below the foot of Chilkoot Pass a draw leaves Box Canyon and extends five or six miles back in the hills. Where the draw leaves the canyon there is a glade one hundred and fifty feet wide by three or four hundred feet long, and this glade is comparatively level.

When we reached this glade the column halted, so that men might change their places in the line, putting fresher ones ahead to break the trail. While standing there I loosened my grip on the rope and used my hands to readjust the collar on my mackinaw to shut out that driving, penetrating snow. Men twenty feet ahead of me were hidden by the storm, and as I was near the rear of the line I could not see what was taking place ahead.

While standing there I first caught a low, hissing sound, something different from the roar of the storm; a sound which, those who heard it, and lived, will never forget. Before any of us knew what it meant we were floundering knee deep in a river of running snow. Back in the hills the snow was sliding

down into the draw; then, as dry sand would do, it ran down the draw to the glade, spread out and ran across the glade until stopped by the steep mountain on the opposite side. When the snow stopped in the glade the weight of the snow still in the draw packed the flow about our feet with a hardness almost that of ice.

When the first flow was packed solid, then the stream broke above the first and a second wave flooded across the glade, packed itself into unbelievable hardness; then the third flowed above the second, the fourth above the third, on and on, one wave after another, it seemed, for hours. As the first wave struck us about the knees the line swerved and many men went down. Some of them never regained their lost footing and were buried completely by the second wave. I was thrown off-balance, but I dragged my feet to the top of the snow, only to find that the surface was not packed, but yielded like shifting sand.

With the coming of the second wave I lost control of my reasoning powers completely. I was seized with a wild panic and knew but one desire: I wanted a solid place on which to plant my feet.

Before me in the line was a little old man whose hair was white. I was young and strong. I caught the old man by his collar and threw him on the snow, then set my feet upon his body. For just a moment I felt that I had triumphed over this thing that tried to drag me down; then the third wave bound my feet again and I was struggling to climb above it.

There are some things about that climb from the Chilkoot death trap that are just as clear to me as they were on that dark day thirty-nine years ago; but the one thing which has never been clear to me is: how long did that river of snow keep running? How many times did I drag my feet out of its grip, only to have them seized and bound again? I can yet form no real conception of the time.

I still can hear that hissing sound. It was like a spent breaker running up a sandy beach—quiet for just a moment before the next breaker follows it in. Always there would be a pause, and then I must brace myself to meet the next sinister, hissing monster.

Once I went down and the snow flowed over me, but like a drowning man I threw my hands above the surface and a piece of wood floated to my touch. What it was, or where it came from I do not know, but I clutched it eagerly, and drew myself erect once more. Another time a sack from some man's cache came by and by planting my feet on it I found time for one good long breath before I had to climb for my life again.

Out of the storm and gloom a man staggered, and using all my strength I struck him down. His body became another rung in the ladder upon which I rested a moment before having to struggle above the next wave of snow. By now I was becoming exhausted. I was wet with perspiration. My throat and lungs burned as I breathed like a running horse. Each climb from one level to the next became more and more difficult. I felt that my will power was failing almost as fast as was my strength.

Just then another man, fighting the same mad fear that I was fighting, staggered near me and I became obsessed with the thought that I must get him beneath my feet. That other man must have felt just the same as I did, for we came together, and locked our arms around about each other in a struggle that meant his life or mine.

Our combat was necessarily short, for the next wave of running snow struck us and we went down together. He fell beneath me. I was half buried by the snow, but the firmness of his body gave me a base on which to use what little strength I had left, and once again I climbed erect.

HOW many waves I climbed above after that I do not know. On the last one I raised myself to my hands and knees. I could not lift myself erect again.

I waited for the next wave to bury me, but it did not come. Suddenly I became conscious of a great stillness. The storm still roared through the canyon but I did not hear it. That terrifying maddening, hissing sound had ceased. The slide was over.

The panic which had gripped me at the beginning of the slide was gone, but now another took its place. I wanted to fly from these barren, snow-clad hills to where a snowflake never fell. But just then I heard a voice calling for help. My reason came back to me and I heard voices all around, frightened, panic stricken voices pleading to be taken out of that living grave.

I remembered that beneath my feet were three men whom I had trampled down in my climb to life. Taking off my gloves, I set them to mark the spot where I then stood, and wildly I began to dig with my bare hands for the man who was calling loudest. Four feet below the surface I uncovered the first face. Pitifully he begged to be taken out, but I left him breathing easily and began digging for the second. He, too, pleaded for release, but I had no time. Some of the voices around me were stilled by now and others were growing faint. I chose the one nearest and went on with my digging. The third I uncovered was unconscious, but he still was breathing easily.

Just as I started digging for the first man a boy came down the canyon and I sent him running for help. As I uncovered the third face the men came up the trail, hundreds of them, bringing shovels. I led some of them to where I had left my gloves and we started digging. The snow was packed so hard that we cut it out in blocks and threw it out of the pit. Seven feet below the surface we found the man with whom I had wrestled. He was unconscious but was easily revived.

We now saw that we had started the pit too small, and had to enlarge it. Benches had to be cut in the side so that one man could pass the blocks of snow to a man above, and he to another, and so on until we reached the bottom. When we reached the next man we realized how imperative was our need of haste. This man was not only unconscious, but the blood was trickling from his lips, and life was all but extinct.

Men worked as they had never worked in their life before. When exhaustion retarded the speed or energy of one, another took his place. Thousands of men braved danger as they worked, for none knew when the snow on the steep mountain side above them might start running and bury them all.

Two and one half hours after the slide stopped running, and twenty-three feet below the surface, we came to the little old man with the white hair; the one whom I had thrown upon the snow in my first spasm of panic. There was just a tiny spark of life left in his body. As gently as we could we lifted him from the pit and sent him down the trail to Dyea, where careful nursing restored him to health.

The old man was the last one taken from the slide alive. Sixty-nine others were taken out afterward, but the Chilkoot slide had claimed them all.

After seeing the old man start on his way to Dyea I went back up the canyon to my tent, which the slide had missed, fell into my blankets and slept the clock twice around.

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet

THE fact story of the Chilkoot slide interested us greatly, not only as a story, but also from a sense of horror and the fact it poses a big question of human conduct. You will understand what I mean after reading it. Undoubtedly it is one thing to use courage in a fight or in any situation where the odds are somewhat understood or where there is a moment to work up that courage—and something else again to use it like lightning in a situation so sudden, unknown and terrifying that maybe there is no time for anything but the blind instinct to survive. Certainly it is a question, and some of the comrades will know the answer.

I wrote to Orris M. Kellar to ask more questions about the story and the characters, and he writes to us as follows:

Holbrook did no mining. He says there was more money in mining the miners, so he ran a restaurant and sleeping tent along the route of travel. It would take about a month for that string of men to pass a given point, and when the tail end came up with him he would move his place on to the head of the line and settle down until the tail end came up again, then move on once more. A cup of coffee cost a dollar. To sleep in one of his beds cost a dollar an hour. Holbrook never got as far as Dawson. His last camp was ninety miles below Selkirk, and there he had cleaned up fifteen thousand dollars so he sold out and came back to Portland—opened a real estate business—was elected to the City Council—etc.

Now, the seventeen men he mentions—: In digging the pit I mention in my story, they did not go straight down, but cut a sloping stairway along this rope which the men had held in their hands when the slide struck them. In this way this particular gang of workers took out seventeen men. Other parties along the rope were digging other pits and taking out other men. He mentions Muller because Muller was a friend of his. Muller died a short time ago, and he always suffered from the crushing he got in the slide.

The name of the old man whom Holbrook first trampled down was A. S. Smith, and he was from Kansas City, Mo. The boy who went to call help was named Clark, if Holbrook remembers it rightly, and he is now in the insurance business in some town in Washington.

How deep was the snow?

This aerial cable was hung about forty feet above the bottom of the canyon, and Holbrook says he stumbled over it just before the slide hit him. So, the snow must have been close to forty feet deep before this last slide started running. Then, they dug through twenty-three feet of the new slide before they came to old man Smith, which would make the snow something like seventy-five feet deep after the last slide.

Holbrook's partner in the restaurant was the tenth man ahead of him on the rope, and yet the storm and gloom was so dense that they could not see each other, although they were talking, calling back and forth to each other as the slide struck them. Holbrook's partner, Jim Grimes, died in the slide. Of the eight men who were staying in Holbrook's tent, he alone lived through that slide.

Doctor Otis Aiken, in the Medical Arts Building, Portland, Oregon, was a young doc-

tor then, and he revived those who could be revived as they were taken from the slide. Tom Linville of Astoria, Oregon, (for many years the sheriff of his county) is the man who took care of the bodies.

Where did the hundreds of rescuers come from?

As these fifty thousand men moved their goods from Dyea, or Skagway, up the trail and through Box Canyon, they moved their tents up also by stages; so, there were thousands of men strung along those thirteen miles, and, during this storm they were all huddled in their tents waiting for the storm to abate. Most of them were below where the slide occurred; and it was only this hundred or so camped at the real foot of the pass who became panicky and started down the trail to safety. When this boy, Clark, sounded the alarm it took only a few minutes for the word to spread down that line and men turned out by the thousand to lend a hand in the rescue.

The thing that induced me to write the story I sent you was: If you had been in Frank Holbrook's shoes would you have thrown that old man down and trampled on him to save your own life?

Frank and I are good friends, and we've spent many nights together arguing about who could make the best "flap-jacks," or the best "sour-dough biscuits," but the night he told me that story I thought a lot less of him than I had before. I've told him so. I thought I would have given that old man a boost to help him out instead of trampling him down in the snow. I still think so, but Frank says I'm wrong.

Frank says there is but one thing he regrets. After this man Smith recovered he came up the trail to Frank's place and told him what he thought of him for trampling him down in the slide. Holbrook says Smith had the greatest command of abusive language of any man that ever lived, and he's sorry now that he can't remember all the vile names that old man Smith called him.

PAUL RANDELL MORRISON, a new and welcome member of the Writers' Brigade, writes us from Portland, Oregon, to explain his antecedents and travels this way:

The Texas ranches that nurtured my first twenty years are situated where cow, cotton, and oil country meet, shunned by all three. My tender years were so stimulated that I resolved to depart the land when it finally produced enough to buy me a railroad ticket out.

After absorbing disillusion in Washington, reorganizing West Point as a corporal, learning arm language on the sidewalks of New York, I returned to Texas. I have since spent my time wondering why. I had to ride out on another man's pass.

At El Paso, where the pass petered, I hied westward via the roof of the Golden State Limited, just back of that wee warm spot on the diner, the cook's stovepipe. The conductor let a pair of us off in the middle of an Arizona desert, where some fool rancher wanted to know if we were looking for a job.

However, I carried with me some of the stuff that the University of Texas had taught me and a heck of a lot of highly personal information about cowpokes—such as "Sleepy" in "The Golden Fleece"—and oil wells and weird negro rites in the cotton fields, where a razor is more respected than a six-gun.

It was a nice freight train that dumped my pal and me in Los Angeles, but the yard bulls weren't; believed that tourists should have certain visible means of livelihood.

I found the native sons of San Francisco (don't say Frisco) had about the same ideas, but up in northern California, in a two-faction mountain town, the natives taught me the duties incumbent upon a country weekly newspaper. You've read of this town; for a half century they've hanged their prisoners off and on without trial.

I didn't go to jail; I came to Oregon.

H. BEDFORD-JONES makes a few comments to go along with his story, "The Fort of Folly"—some dates and facts of that mad zealous raid at Harper's Ferry.

John Brown and six of his men were hanged at Charleston, county seat of Jefferson County, Virginia (present West Virginia.) They were convicted of treason and inciting rebellion within the Common wealth of Virginia, and of first degree murder. The young Iowan and the blond enthusiast, Cook, were hanged together.

Brown himself repudiated the suggested plea of insanity, giving out that he did not wish to be rescued. He died less with the attitude of a martyr than with that of a fatalist who had marched to his destined end. He believed that this end would promote the cause for which he had crusaded.

The scheme of entering Virginia at Harper's Ferry, or of any foray into the South, was

opposed by Northern patrons in whom Brown confided, as being too drastic and perilous. As it was, he failed. He was compelled to act October 16th instead of on the arranged date of October 24th. This deprived him of a number of recruits. Throughout the fighting on Monday, the 17th, he grew more and more at a loss what to do. His outpost detachments were isolated, the extra arms for which he waited did not arrive, and though he had hostages, all the terms he essayed were rejected by the besiegers. Yet he could not kill his hostages.

Where lay the story in all this? In the vision of one brave man, Freedom's fanatic; whose brave folly, which at the time seemed sheer moon-madness, was destined to sweep a nation and take its place in history.

LINTON DAVIES of the editorial staff read Colonel Graham's letter (in the last Camp-Fire) with great interest because he was on the staff of The Stars and Stripes and attended the meeting at which the name of the American Legion was selected. Also Davies served for a time in another "American Legion" that hasn't yet been mentioned —a legion of Americans in the Canadian Army. His recollections are good ones, and I've asked him to give them to us.

Linton Davies enlisted in the Victoria Independent Squadron, British Columbia Horse, in November, 1915; transferred to 112th (or 212th) Battalion (the "American Legion Brigade") at Vancouver, transferred to 68th Battery, Canadian Field Artillery. Trained at Petawawa Camp, in Ontario, rank driver, later bombardier. One night they were moving up field pieces through some wood roads, and Davies' group started down a slope with the weight of the field gun pushing their six horses along. The officer leading them had picked the wrong road. There was a fallen tree across it. The officer and his horse pinwheeled over it, and the six horses and field gun piled up on the tree. Davies was riding one of the horses, and woke up in a hospital. There they discovered what had somehow been overlooked—he had flat feet. That ended his chances of getting to France with the Canadians at that time. He served as acting sergeant with the 70th Battery, Toronto Artillery Brigade, and was discharged in December, 1916.

He still wanted to go to France, and his father knew somebody. So after the United States declared war, Davies went across with Base Hospital 46. Flat feet and all, they put him to work as a courier, running messages. He was in the zone of advance, Toul sector, during the Chateau Thierry battle. Then in the St. Mihiel and Argonne drives. Wounded, but slightly; and then gassed. He had on a gas mask, but the gas seeped into his eyes. He was blind for three weeks, and thinks he owes his eyesight to a British medical officer who happened to drop into the hospital. Because the symptoms weren't like the effects of chlorine or mustard, the doctors were concluding the trouble wasn't gas at all. They asked the British doctor about Davies' case. He'd had three like it; told them the eyesight could be restored, but not completely, and how to do it; the cause was a new gas the Germans had experimented with briefly. In a month Davies was seeing again, fairly well, with the right glasses. He was then transferred to The Stars and Stripes, because he had been, briefly, a reporter.

Well, it's time for those recollections.

The first appearance of the name American Legion in military insignia, I believe, came about with the official authorization by General Sam Hughes, Canadian Minister of Defense, of the organization of the Ninety-seventh Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Forces, as the American Legion. (The Canadian battalion was the counterpart in personnel and tactical application of the American regiment.) The Ninety-seventh's cap badge, the customary Maple Leaf, bore below the numerals 97 the words *American Legion* on a scroll.

Though the Americans had taken the oath to serve King George loyally and faithfully and to follow the British flag, they still liked the Stars and Stripes. They saw no wrong in this—they felt that they could be good Amer-

icans and still be good soldiers of the Dominion. And from sergeants to buck privates the whole enlisted outfit took it as a matter of course when the Suicide Squad—the Machine Gun Section—stepped a flagpole and raised the Star-Spangled Banner while the battalion stood to *Attention* and the bugler sounded *To the Colors.*

The camp officers just about dropped dead in a double rank. When they had recovered, half of them were purple in the face and calling for blood; the other half were rolling in their tents, weak from laughter. The Camp Commanding Officer had the battalion's C.O. on the carpet. This flag business had to stop.

What happened then wasn't exactly a mutiny. The old-timers who had marched and sweated in Jolo and Zamboanga and Mexico just stood stiffly at attention and explained patiently, "We'd like to salute the Flag, sir." Finally they won their point. Thereafter the American flag rose to the top of the pole daily to the stirring strains of *Colors* while the battalion paid its respects.

Tracy Richardson, the famous soldier of fortune, was in that Suicide Squad and had plenty to do with this flag incident.

I think it is not generally known that for a time the Canadian Expeditionary Forces planned to put a whole brigade in the field as its own American Legion. The Ninety-seventh had made such a good showing that there was little or no opposition when someone, Canadian or American, proposed the organization of three more battalions. These were, if I remember correctly, the 111th, the 112th, and the 113th—or were they the 211th, the 212th and the 213th? They were quartered in Vancouver, B. C., and one battalion, the 112th (212th?) was commanded by a colonel or lieutenant-colonel who had served for many years in the American army.

But the brigade plan went awry, chiefly because most Americans who felt that way had already enlisted in other Canadian outfits. For instance, there was one battery of field artillery recruited in that same district—Vancouver—of which the personnel was twenty per cent American. And I believe these three battalions were absorbed by other units.

One of the greatest influences that shaped the American Legion at its creation in Paris in 1918 was the editorial policy of *The Stars and Stripes.* In military parlance the unit was known as the First Censor and Press Company, G-2 d. (G-2 was Military Intelligence, and the *d* division had the job of disseminating propaganda in Allied countries.) Actually, however, the whole shebang was just a newspaper.

It made a great record. Established in a foreign land, and carried on for sixteen months in war time, it started in the red (twenty-five thousand francs borrowed from the General Staff), faced the requirement that it pay for itself, and wound up with a profit of $70,000. All this on the subscription price of half a franc a copy.

It made its first appearance on February 8, 1918, when the first American divisions were either getting a taste of trench life in quiet sectors or learning new tricks in the training areas back of the lines. It came out every Friday with eight pages of war news, sports, verse, cartoons, and such indispensable features as the Questions and Answers department.

The first issue was turned out in a hall bedroom in the Hotel Sainte-Anne at 10 Rue Ste.-Anne in Paris by Captain Guy T. Viskniskki, two lieutenants and two privates—Private Hudson Hawley, formerly of the *New York Sun,* and Private Abian A. Wallgren, who moved in from the Fifth Marines to convulse the A.E.F. with his never-to-be-forgotten cartoons. It made a hit from the start, and soon picked up as managing editor Private Harold W. Ross, of the Eighteenth Engineers (Railway), formerly of the *San Francisco Call* and other papers. Also came Sergeant Alexander Woollcott from Base Hospital Eight and the *New York Times,* who had shone back home as dean of the New York drama critics.

There was some murmuring at this last addition, one soldier-journalist inquiring, "What's this paper going to do with a drama critic?" He answered his own question by acknowledging the presence of a "theater of war." And in this theater of war Woolcott became the ace correspondent at the Front, taking rank with the world's best.

Another old-timer on the editorial council was John T. Winterich of the Ninety-sixth Aero Squadron, formerly of the *Springfield Republican,* a demon for work and probably, according to some observers, the only entirely sane member of the staff. Although there were generals and colonels who had their doubts of Winterich.

For the paper was of, by and for the buck private and no mistake. The editorial council argued that there were more bucks than officers, and that the paper was the one place where the buck might speak up and talk back. So when generals came stamping in to tell the editors what to do, the editors listened and then made up their own minds. One officer submitted a story that would have made a column of type, and insisted it must go on the first page. The editors, finding it was a

call for men with special qualifications for special duty, cut it down to two paragraphs and ran it on an inside page. The officer sounded off; but after the paper came out, he urged the editors to say no more about that special duty—he had been swamped with replies.

In the office, rank was something to laugh off. Private Ross, as editor, once detailed Captain Grantland Rice, reporter, to a divisional football match or something of the sort at Havre. Rice objected, Ross insisted.

"I'd rather stay in Paris," Rice pointed out. "And a private can't shuffle a captain around."

"Oh no?" asked Ross with a straight and lowering face. "You'll go, or I'll have you courtmartialed!"

"Hell, Harold, you can't do that!" Rice expostulated. "You're only a private." But Rice fell back, disconcerted, then joined in the general laugh. He went to Havre.

The paper was its own censor. And sometimes it was a problem how to print news without telling too much, a problem that provoked Captain Franklin Pierce Adams, the F.P.A. of the *New York Tribune*, and the paper's columnist de luxe, to paraphrase Tennyson thus:

A certain distance,
A certain distance,
A certain distance onward,
Into the eastern sector
Rode a certain percentage of the—Division.

Ross is now editor of *The New Yorker*, Winterich is editing *The American Legion Monthly*.

It was *The Stars and Stripes* that inspired the A. E. F. to make the American Legion a truly representative veterans' organization, with high ideals and a democratic spirit. Thanks to the paper's exposition of the task, the average buck reminded himself that after the Civil War the Civil War veterans' organization, the Grand Army of the Republic, and other factors, elected General Grant to the Presidency. Elect a general President? No! roared the doughboy. And so the Paris convention of March 15 and 16, 1918, picked an executive committee, of which half the members were enlisted men, to form the permanent organization later in the United States. And the edict went forth from the ranks: No politics.

Five thousand officers and enlisted men showed up for the convention. Major Eric Wood, of the Eighty-eighth Division, acted as chairman. High-ranking officers rubbed elbows with buck privates. Colonel Carl E. Ristine of the Thirty-fifth Division and his orderly came in together—both delegates.

The numerous suggested names for the organization evoked amusing reactions. The *Stars and Stripes* delegation was on the alert to stick a pin in any fancy name. It was Sergeant Alexander Woollcott, I believe, who pointed out that the name "legion" smacked of the silk stocking. But the convention was willing to consider silk stockings.

The word "veterans" got a great play, and one buck-private delegate remarked with a shake of his head, "Imagine me a veteran! And when I left home I wasn't old enough to buy a drink."

THANKS go to all these comrades for good letters on various subjects:

Wm. A. Bowie, Maplewood, N. J.; Judd Lawson, Cleveland, Ohio; C. A. Shilling, San Luis Obispo, California; Archie Giddings, Watsonville, California; R. E. Flaig, Emeryville, Calif.; Dawson S. Hunter, Smithtown Branch, New York; B. Martin, New York City; Robert B. Mac Laine, Miles City, Montana; V. A. Masengil, Eugene, Oregon; Fred E. Schwarz, Chicago, Ill.; Mrs. Anna B. Brooks, San Diego, Calif.; George J. Champion, Baldwin Park, California; J. E. Finfrock, Dayton, Ohio; Thomas Q. Lempertz, Hollywood, California; James C. Southcott, San Francisco, California.

TRACY RICHARDSON just dropped into the office, and I showed him the reference to himself in Linton Davies' piece about the Legion. Tracy Richardson has fought in ten wars, and in all of them he carried a tiny American flag in his pocket. It was Tracy's eight by ten inch flag that went to the top of the flag pole. He has stories of that hard boiled American Legion outfit in the Canadian army, and I've asked him to tell us some of them in the next issue.

H. B.

Information
you can't get elsewhere

Ask Adventure

A MONGOLIAN "road map" won't be easy reading.

Request:—I read recently of a map of Mongolia, published in the Mongolian language. Can you tell me where I could get a copy of this map, and its approximate cost?

Can you tell me where to find out about caravan routes in Mongolia, and from Mongolia to Siberia?

Is there a good elementary grammar of the Mongolian language?

—Billy Elliott, Taft, Calif.

Reply to Mr. Paul H. Franson:—I would suggest that you write to La Librairie Francaise, Hotel Peking, Peping, China. They will probably be able to secure this map for you, if it is in existence.

As to referring you to one book which gives information regarding caravan routes in the countries you specify, that would be equivalent to referring you to a good book of North America. A very interesting book which covers the subject fairly well is *Travels in Tartary, Thibet, and China,* by Huc & Gabet. This work is published by Harper Brothers, in New York. The price is approximately $6.00.

Write to the Shanghai Commercial Press, Shanghai, China, and ask them if they publish anything on the Mongolian language. I do not know of a grammar on Mongolian language, but if such is available, the Shanghai Commercial Press may be able to furnish it or to refer you to the publisher.

OLD Songs that Men Have Sung—Can any reader help on this one?

Request:—I wonder if you have an old song in your collection by the title of "The Blackbird?" It is a patriotic song, came out about the time of the War of 1812. There is a story in our local history of a William Crawford, nicknamed "Old Brittania." He cautioned his son not to sing "The Blackbird," and when his son's whistling persisted, he shot him.

Crawford was the first man hanged in Washington County, Pa., and the yarn goes on to tell how as the crowd hurried up Gallow's Hill, "Old Brittania," marching beside his coffin to the scaffold, said: "Don't hurry, boys. The hanging won't take place 'til I get there."

Have you any knowledge of this song?

—Harry C. Yohe, Monongahela, Pa.

Reply by Mr. Robert Frothingham:—"The Blackbird" is a new one on me. The odd story you tell may help run it down, and so I'll turn it over to *Adventure's* readers.

MONEY is the oil for African big game guns.

Request:—I wish information dealing with the game laws in Africa, especially in British territory.

Is it necessary to have license for bagging elephant, rhino, lion, eland, leopard, and buffalo? What is the cost of a license for an elephant, or a rhino? What is the best regions for elephant?

About what would be your estimate of the price, for a trip in Africa, for a party of two, traveling by truck when we get there?

What wages do porters get for their work?

What would be the most important medical equipment necessary for a jungle trip?

Is it possible to buy cartridges for American made guns, in Africa? About what would be the price per hundred rounds?

—Elton Burns, Albion, Pa.

Reply by Mr. Gordon MacCreagh:—Generally speaking, when one makes a trip to

shoot big game in Africa, one goes to East Africa—reasons being, accessibility and fine winter climate as well as preponderance of many different species of game. I can't cover all of East Africa in a letter such as this; but let us take some one district as an example. All the others will more or less correspond, with some variations in season and types of game.

Let us take Kenya Colony, as being the most desirable.

To begin with, you must realize that big game in Africa is a crop just as much as is corn or coffee. It is a revenue producing crop, and is strictly regulated by every colonial government along lines to make the foreign sport pay as much of the revenue as possible.

License:—Upon entry you must register every weapon you possess. Registration means that the weapons are deposited with the game commissioner and are not returned until, (1) he has satisfied himself that you are the kind of person the colony cares to allow to shoot game in the interior, and, (2) you have taken out a license. The reason for the first is that certain people, amongst them, rich Americans, have gone into the interior and have slaughtered game in a very unsportsmanlike manner as well as overshooting their licenses.

The visitor's (foreigner's) license in Kenya is $500.00 which permits one elephant, one rhino, two kudu, and so on all the way down a long list; and don't for a moment imagine that two people could get by on one license. Game warden supervision is unbelievably strict, and non-compliance with regulations means loss of license, and no fooling.

Cost of safari:—It is practically impossible for a stranger, unfamiliar with African conditions, to make a safari without adequate guidance. This sounds maybe didactic; but it is reasonable when you consider that the inexperienced man needs to hire a guide to go hunting a deer in the Maine woods.

Hence the "white hunter," who is, plain and simple, a guide. A stranger practically must hire a white hunter. He could, given time, no doubt learn his way about sufficiently to do without a white hunter; but with most people it is a matter of time. No man can go into Africa and learn enough about conditions in one season to do any worthwhile shooting without a hunter. Remember that one season is cut down by the monsoon rains to about six months.

I dwell upon the white hunter because we would all like to do without him. We would like to do without him because his pay is $500.00 a month and up. The hunter earns his pay, doing all your hiring of help, catering, trucking, and generally running your camp in addition to taking you where game is.

As you yourself suggest, the way to go is by truck, because of the enormous saving in time and the mobility in getting to where game is. The usual plan of procedure is to figure in units of three white men at a time. Meaning, a four passenger car carries three visiting hunters, their guns and a driver; and a truck carries camping equipment and servants.

The cost of all this gets to skating on troublesome ice. Some men must have so many different kinds of drinks and canned goods that they can't get by on less than two thousand dollars a month. But there is no reason why it shouldn't be done—guide, equipment, everything—on one thousand dollars a month. And there are ways of doing it on much less; which means, going there and living a while and asking how and meeting the right people.

Guns:—If you have them and like them, of course nothing will suit you but just them. You can buy most kinds of ammunition in most African big game centers, for the very reason that people come there with most kinds of rifles. Your 30-06 and .270 and .405 Winchester are certainly available in Nairobi.

But, if you are not stuck on any particular gun, it is well to remember that first class guns are available at second hand in Nairobi, left by rich sports.

If you consider the matter seriously, you can write to Messrs. Gethin and Hewlett in Nairobi, Kenya Colony, state your definite plans and requirements, and they will quote you a price complete to include even meeting you at the steamer and buying your sun helmet.

Maps:—Write Secretary, Survey Office, Nairobi, for their complete maps that show even water holes. Similarly, to any other colony you may be considering.

A MOTORCYCLE stunt man had better take it easy.

Request:—Why do all motorcycle races go to the left? Seems to me that turning to the right on a curve would be safer.

What size machine is best for dirt track racing? I notice that lots of racers use one-cylinder motors. Why?

Could you describe several races that we could have at our local club? The club is new and none of us know much about racing.

I'd like to know more about stunt riding.

I'd like to learn a few that none of the other boys have ever seen.

—I. W. Sudduth, Pensacola, Fla.

Reply by Mr. Charles Dodge:—In most of us the right leg is stronger than the left. If you were blindfolded and walked or ran on an open plain, you'd travel a complete circle to the left. The first races of history were foot races, which were all run counter clock wise presumably for this reason. Thus history tells us horse racing, chariot contests and racing of every kind through history to our present auto and motorcycle races swing around in the same direction. Somehow it seems more natural for the boys to lean around the turns to the left than to the right.

On dirt track racing the small motors with less cubic inch displacement are much preferred to the larger ones. This is because of their easier handling, and the fact that the little twenty-one inch singles or forty-five inch twins can be "souped up" to bat off one hundred miles an hour or more, which is all the speed a shorter oval track can take. Straightaway races on beaches allow the larger seventy-fours occasionally, but in larger motors the moving parts have to be built so large and heavy that they often tear themselves apart trying to get out the horse power.

By writing to the American Motorcycle Association at 252 North High Street, Columbus, Ohio, you can get a complete rule book showing all the sizes allowed for Class A, B and C events, in every one of the large number of varieties of motorcycle contests around the country. This booklet is very explicit, and you'd want to get an official sanction from the AMA anyway before running an official meet of any kind.

I don't recommend stunt riding much, although I've seen a good many tricky ones that stand your hair on end—some of them not as dangerous as they look. Thrusting out your left foot with straight leg, foot on the ground, and spinning the motorcycle around with your leg as a pivot is one, which takes some practice and looks somewhat harder than it really is. Standing on the saddle with arms out straight is another; the faster a wheel turns in a given plane the harder it is to turn it from side to side; and a motorcycle going fast enough will run on a level stretch like a smooth beach without overturning (excepting always the "ifs") while the rider stands on his head, rides side saddle, stands on the saddle and goes through all manner of acrobatics.

With a sidecar it is quite a trick to ride with the sidecar wheel off the ground, though it doesn't do the frame any good. Then some of the boys like to get off to such a sudden start when there's room enough in front to lift their front wheels off the ground when riding solo, and go down the street on their one rear wheel only, like a skittish horse. Motorcycle polo gives plenty of chance for fancy riding, as you can well imagine. Slow riding is another stunt that takes plenty of skill. Ride on a long plank or inside a narrow marked strip on the ground about two inches wider than your tires on either side. Try it with someone else after you've practiced, with the first fellow to touch the ground with his feet disqualified and the last one to reach the other end the winner. That takes skilful balancing.

If you have a small grade around your town, try riding straight up, shifting to neutral and coasting back backwards. That takes plenty of doing, too. Anyone watching you go up and slide back and going up again will think it's a cinch—but they take a spill trying to do it the way you will be after a little practice.

IT'S a matter of who collects the taxes on Swain's Island, S. S.

Request:—In an endeavor to obtain authentic information regarding Swain's Island I am writing you this letter.

Can you tell me the date of settlement of Swain's Island; full names of first settlers; any other pertinent data or information that you may have or be aware of down to the present time.

—A. B. Brown, Tuluila, Samoa.

Reply by Mr. William McCreadie:—Swain's Island, as you probably know, has had many names: Quiros, Gente Hermosa, Olosega, Swain's and latterly Jennings' Island. Discovered by Quiros in 1606, it was later carelessly explored by an American expedition in 1846. In 1856 the island was given to Eli Jennings, an American citizen, by Captain Turner, a British subject. What claim Turner had to it is uncertain. Jennings married Maria, a native woman from Upolou Samoa, and he lived with her until 1878. The certificate of his death and his marriage were recorded at the American consulate in Apia. Maria died in 1891, leaving the island to her son Eli Hutchinson Jennings. In 1909 the Resident Commissioner of the Gilberts group called and collected taxes, amounting to eighty-five dollars, from Jennings for the British government, showing that it was still claimed as British territory. In 1910 inquiries resulted in the tax money being re-

funded and American sovereignty allowed.

This Eli died in 1920 and by his *last* will gave the island and all his property to his daughter Anne Eliza Carruthers, wife of Irving Nothington Carruthers of Samoa, a British subject, and to his son, Alexander Jennings, as tenants in common. In 1921 Carruthers endeavoured to probate this last will but it was held there was no court with the necessary jurisdiction. Two prior wills of members of the Jennings family were probated in the American Consulate court at Apia, but it held that it had no such power. Mrs. Carruthers died intestate in August, 1924, and letters of administration were granted to Carruthers as guardian of the five minor children.

However there was dissatisfaction and the matter was investigated by the Navy Department, where doubt was expressed as to whether the Consulate court at Apia had the necessary jurisdiction to probate Eli's will. The status also of the island was indefinite, but later all this was cleared up. The island was placed definitely under the authority of the Navy department of American Samoa. I regret I cannot tell you what the situation is today, re Alex or Carruthers, or if they still live. I understand Alex has the island, but a letter to him via Tutuila should clear up that item.

FIRST aid to a clogged gun bore.

Request:—I fired a hand loaded black powder cartridge from my 11 M/M Mauser rifle, and when I tried to clean the barrel a few mintes later I discovered that there was a solid clog of hardened powder residue about one-third way from the breech. I have tried coal oil, Hoppes No. 9, gasoline, nitric acid, 3 in 1 oil, Winchester rust remover and kerosene. I have only been able to remove a little of it. Could you tell me how to get rid of it.

—C. Douglas, Courtenay, B. C.

Reply by Mr. Donegan Wiggins:—The proper material to clean powder caking in the barrel of a gun is nothing more than hot water, poured down the bore and enough of it used to soften the deposit, which can be entirely washed away in this manner, or removed with a rag on the cleaning rod.

I have seen some very stubborn cases of powder fouling removed in this way from black powder arms, and some even get good results in cleaning smokeless powder fouling with it also, in cases where metal fouling is not present, and nitrosolvent isn't available. I am sure it will serve you well.

A BASEBALL quandary:

Request:—I'd like to know the correct answer to the following baseball problems. None out, runner on first. The batter hits a hard line drive to the first baseman, the ball deflects off his glove, hits the runner, bounds in the air and the second baseman catches the ball before it hits the ground. Is anybody out? If so, who and why?

Does it make any difference if the batted ball is a hit for the batter or an error for the fielder?

—William S. Parsons, East Chicago, Ill.

Reply by Mr. Frederick G. Lieb:—In the case you cite, the batsman is out the same as though his fly was hit direct to second baseman. Ball remains in play, and runner, who was on first, may be doubled off that bag if he did not return before ball could be thrown to that base. When the ball hits umpire or base-runner, after having been first touched by a fielder, it remains in play. The scoring of the play has no bearing on it. In this case, it was a putout, with first baseman getting an assist.

A BEAST of burden—but consider the beast and lighten the burden.

Request:—What is the greatest known speed ever attained by a horse, or that can be attained by one? I do not refer to the timing in a race, but that which may be made in a spurt, or in a short distance when galloping full out, when every effort is made to gain the utmost possible speed.

To illustrate my meaning:—In the English Derby, the speed attained I think is about thirty-seven m. p. h. for the full distance, but the start and finish of the race is probably very much more than this, or the effort of some individual animal during the course.

I have been able to keep pace with a motor car for about a third of a mile with the speedometer showing up to thirty-five m. p. h. and this on mere 14.1 hand pony.

I am sure a thoroughbred racer when going full out will far exceed this.

What is the greatest known distance, in miles, ever covered by a horse in twenty-four hours?

We sometimes read of prodigious feats of endurance performed by horses in the Western States of your country, in the old days,

and also of great distances covered by Arab horses or Mongolian ponies. Now I should be very grateful to know of some of the greatest feats performed, as known to you.

What distance should a horse or pony, in hard condition, be able to cover between sunrise and sunset (a day's ride), and keep up for four or five days at a stretch?

What would be the greatest distance such an animal could cover in a day if every effort were required?

I know it will be difficult for you to generalize on such a question, but from your own experience and knowledge of the subject, and taking a good average pony or horse (not an exceptional animal) you ought to be able to give me a fairly accurate idea.

I have a couple of ponies, one a half Arab 14.1 hands, and the other a country bred from Rajputana 14.2 hands, and I should very much like to train them for long distance work.

The animals are eight and ten years old, respectively. I shall be very grateful if you can give me some information as to how to train them for long distance work.

I shall be grateful, too, for the names and addresses where obtainable, of books and periodicals on the subject.

—Geo. T. Barker, Bihar, India.

Reply by Major R. E. Dupuy:—What is the greatest known speed ever attained by a horse? That is a moot question. The latest speed test I know of was at Havana, December 26 last, when Jesse Owens, track star, sprinted 100 yards against a racehorse, the animal covering 140 yards. Owens won by 20 yards, in the time of 9.9 seconds. The animal, of course, started from a standstill. That would indicate a speed from a standstill, on a spurt, of approximately 28.3 m. p. h. for the horse, if my arithmetic is correct, and the horse must have been travelling much faster when he hit his stride. I am sorry I cannot answer this more definitely.

In a test some years ago—1930, I believe—at Fort Riley, the U. S. Cavalry School, a brigade of two regiments of cavalry, accompanied by a battery of horse artillery, marched 100 miles in 24 hours, without injury to any man or animal. The test was conducted under stringent conditions and there is no doubt about the result. However, it must be borne in mind that this was the culminating march of a long hardening period pointed to this end, and cannot be taken as probable for an ordinary unit. Our cavalry and horse-drawn field artillery think nothing of thirty-mile marches in ordinary route-marching, day in and out, the marches beginning early in the morning and ending early in the afternoon. In the test march noted above, and all our marching, the procedure is—march 50 minutes, rest 10, per hour. Walk, trot and gallop are alternated with periods of dismounting and walking with the animals. Shoeing on the test march was done by farriers during the halts, replacing cast shoes with already fitted shoes, cold. A fitted pair of shoes for fore and hind are carried for each animal on all marches, in the saddle-bags.

For a number of years annual endurance rides were held in Vermont, for testing various breeds of animals. The test, rigidly watched, consisted of five successive days of 60 miles per day. No dismounting and walking was permitted, although halts where the rider could dismount, were O.K. Horses were checked by vets before moving out, and on completion of the day's march. As soon as an animal went lame it was eliminated. It might be interesting to note that the type of animal standing up best under these tests, in the long run, was a grade thoroughbred. A minimum of 200 lbs. was carried, light riders being weighted.

In 1886 as result of a bet between two well-known turfmen of the United States, a race was held from Galveston, Texas, to Rutland, Vt., the only condition being that no horse would be ridden more than 10 hours per day. Length of course, 1,799 miles. Winner, a stallion (breed unknown) named Joe, at one time used, it was said, to hunt buffalo. The rider was Frank T. Hopkins, still living in Long Island City. Time, 31 days and a fraction, and average daily distance, 57.7 miles. I have no idea how many entries started, or how many finished.

As for conditioning for long distance work, I believe the best plan would be to start on a schedule, daily, making marches of gradually increasing length, beginning with what you know your animals can do. Plenty of walking, particularly uphill, for wind and leg development. Be sure that you alternate walk, trot and gallop, with fixed hourly halts. And, both for your own and the animal's sake, make it a rule to dismount on the longer rides, and lead for about ten minutes per hour. These are only suggestions. Every one has his pet theories. But don't try too long distances until you are sure your animals can make the effort without danger.

Suggest, in regard to periodicals and other publications, a subscription to "The Horse," issued by the American Remount Association, Washington, D. C., or the "Cavalry Journal," issued by the Cavalry Association, Washington, D. C. Both are very interesting publications, and both carry lists of good horse books.

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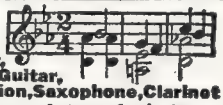
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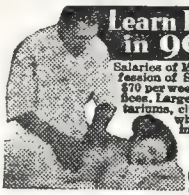

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5.25-17	2.90	1.15
28x5.25-18	2.90	1.15
29x5.25-19	2.95	1.15
30x5.25-20	2.95	1.15
31x5.25-21	2.95	1.15
5.50-17	2.95	1.15
28x5.50-18	2.95	1.15
29x5.50-19	2.95	1.15
6.00-17	2.40	1.15
30x6.00-18	2.40	1.15
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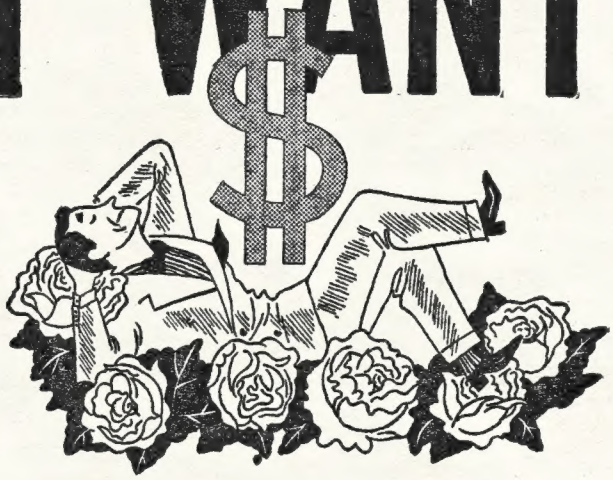

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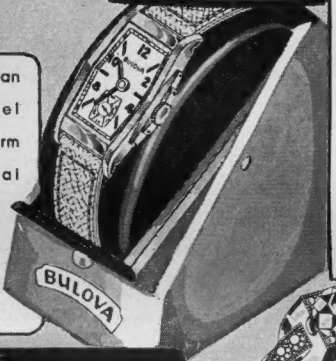

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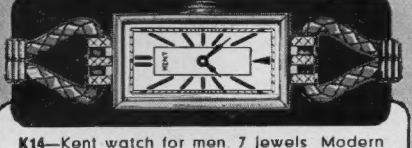
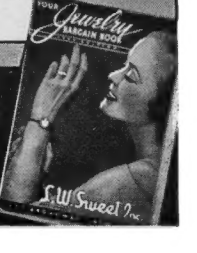
$16.75
I-186—Heavy 10K natural gold ring for men. 2 initials and diamond on genuine black onyx. A real bargain.
$1.58 a month



K14—Kent watch for men. 7 jewels. Modern dial. Braided leather strap..... **$15.95**
$1.50 a month

$50
A333—Sworn Perfect diamond. 4 other diamonds; 14K white gold. Affidavit of Perfection with purchase.
$4.90 a month

$29.95
A127—Pretty engagement ring with 5 diamonds. 14K natural gold.
$2.90 a month



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